argosy

June 3/6

WINSTON CHURCHILL'S

lost short story... plus
Graham Greene, Ray Bradbury etc.

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argosy

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Over now to you

WINSTON CHURCHILL'S 'lost' short story

In January 1899, in "The Harmsworth Magazine," edited by Alfred C. Harmsworth, there appeared a short story by a 24-year-old journalist. Tucked between an illustrated poem entitled, "In Praise of Baby," and a picture feature called, "Our Monthly Gallery," was the story—*Man Overboard*, by Winston Spencer Churchill.

The editor, later to become Lord Northcliffe, then felt it necessary to print a footnote to this story saying: "As by a very remarkable coincidence there are two Winston Churchills, both writers, we may mention that this Mr. Churchill is the son of the late Lord Randolph Churchill."

Argosy, having rediscovered this "lost" story, publishes it on page 14. The subsequent life of Winston Churchill—and his influence on the course of history—have taken care of the footnote.

◆ ABRAHAM ROTHBERG's brilliant novel, *The Thousand Doors*, which opens in this issue, has created a big stir in America and will undoubtedly be a best-seller in Britain. And it is his first novel.

Although a native New Yorker, 43-year-old Rothberg has spent a good deal of his time in Europe on overseas service for the US Army and then as European correspondent for an American weekly and the "Guardian" here.

He gives three reasons for writing this first novel of his, which has been greeted in America as "one of the best suspense stories for years."

"First, I have long been concerned with the way Communist countries treat intellectuals, particularly writers. Behind the Iron Curtain, writers play a unique rôle, one of which we all should be more aware. Secondly, I've been a student of Communist affairs for many years and was once associated with Radio Free Europe. And thirdly, Yugoslavia, where the story is set, is a place I've always loved—a beautiful country with wonderful people."

◆ D'ARCY NILAND, author of "The Shiralee" and "Call Me When The Cross Turns Over," takes us to the other side of the world with his powerful story, *A Crown of Weeds.*

Niland, an Australian of Irish extraction, decided early in life to be a writer and that the only real way to be able to write about people was to move, work and live among them. Accordingly, he has led a knockabout life in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

He is married (to novelist Ruth Park) and has five children. Besides his five novels, he has written several non-fiction books including, "How To Make Your Stories Sell." Niland should know what he is talking about. He has written more than five hundred of them.

◆ Those who know their science fiction know that America's RAY BRADBURY is one of the top men in that field. His stories always have an inventiveness, a novelty about them—and not the least unusual thing about *The Kilimanjaro Machine* is how it came into being.

Bradbury had been deeply affected by the death of Ernest Hemingway. Then one day he happened to see an item in a newspaper.

"A reporter had gone to Ketchum, Idaho, to interview the locals," he recalls. "He found a hunter who well remembered Hemingway. He had seen him often—head bent in thought, health obviously failing, walking down the road. 'That poor old man on the road,' was how the hunter described him.

"The phrase hit me. I simply had to get that 'old man' off the road. I couldn't leave him there. *The Kilimanjaro Machine* is my tribute to him."

MORTMAIN

by Graham Greene

HOW wonderfully secure and peaceful a genuine marriage seemed to Carter, when he attained it at the age of forty-two. He even enjoyed every moment of the church service, except when he saw Josephine wiping away a tear as he conducted Julia down the aisle. It was typical of this new frank relationship that Josephine was there at all. He had no secrets from Julia; they had often talked together of his ten tormented years with Josephine, of her extravagant jealousy, of her well-timed hysterics. "It was her insecurity," Julia argued with understanding, and she was quite convinced that in a little while it would be possible to form a friendship with Josephine.

"I doubt it, darling."

"Why? I can't help being fond of anyone who loved you."

"It was a rather cruel love."

"Perhaps at the end when she knew she was losing you, but, darling, there *were* happy years."

"Yes." But he wanted to forget that he had ever loved anyone before Julia.

Her generosity sometimes staggered him. On the seventh day of their honeymoon, when they were drinking retsina in a little restaurant on the beach by Sunium, he accidentally took a letter from Josephine out of his pocket. It had arrived the day before and he had concealed it, for fear of hurting Julia. It was typical of Josephine that she could not leave him alone for the brief period of the honeymoon. Even her handwriting was now abhorrent to him—very neat, very small, in black ink the colour of her hair. Julia was platinum-fair. How had he

ever thought that black hair was beautiful? Or been impatient to read letters in black ink?

"What's the letter, darling? I didn't know there had been a post."

"It's from Josephine. It came yesterday."

"But you haven't even opened it!" she exclaimed without a word of reproach.

"I don't want to think about her."

"But, darling, she may be ill."

"Not she."

"Or in distress."

"She earns more with her fashion designs than I do with my stories."

"Darling, let's be kind. We can afford to be. We are so happy."

So he opened the letter. It was affectionate and uncomplaining and he read it with distaste:

> Dear Philip,
>
> I didn't want to be a death's head at the reception, so I had no chance to say goodbye and wish you both the greatest possible happiness. I thought Julia looked terribly beautiful and so very, very young. You must look after her carefully. I know how well you can do that, Philip dear. When I saw her, I couldn't help wondering why you took such a long time to make up your mind to leave me. Silly Philip. It's much less painful to act quickly.
>
> I don't suppose you are interested to hear about my activities now, but just in case you are worrying a little about me—you know what an old worrier you are—I want you to know that I'm working *very* hard at a whole series for—guess, the French *Vogue*. They are paying me a fortune in francs, and I simply have no time for unhappy thoughts. I've been back once—I hope you don't mind—to our apartment (slip of the tongue) because I'd lost a key sketch. I found it at the back of our communal drawer—the ideas-bank, do

They talked of his ten tormented years—her extravagant jealousy and her well-timed hysterics

you remember? I thought I'd taken all my stuff away, but there it was between the leaves of the story you started that heavenly summer, and never finished, at Napoule. Now I'm rambling on when all I really wanted to say was: Be happy, both of you.

Love, Josephine

Carter handed the letter to Julia and said, "It could have been worse."

"But would she like me to read it?"

"Oh, it's meant for both of us." Again he thought how wonderful it was to have no secrets. There had been so many secrets during the last ten years, even innocent secrets, for fear of misunderstanding, of Josephine's rage or silence. Now he had no fear of anything at all: he could have trusted even a guilty secret to Julia's sympathy and comprehension.

He said, "I was a fool not to show you the letter yesterday. I'll never do anything like that again." He tried to recall Spenser's line—*Port after stormie seas.*

When Julia had finished reading the letter she said, "I think she's a wonderful woman. How very, very sweet of her to write like that. You know I was—only now and then of course—just a little bit worried about her. After all *I* wouldn't like to lose you after ten years."

When they were in the taxi going back to Athens she said, "Were you very happy at Napoule?"

"Yes. I suppose so. I don't remember. It wasn't like this."

With the antennae of a lover he could feel her moving away from him, though their shoulders still touched. The sun was bright on the road from Sunium, the warm sleepy loving siesta lay ahead, and yet . . . "Is anything the matter, darling?" he asked.

"Not really . . . It's only . . . do you think one day you'll say the same about Athens as about Napoule, 'I don't remember, it wasn't like this.'"

"What a dear fool you are," he said and kissed her. After that they played a little in the taxi going back to Athens, and when the streets began to unroll she sat up and combed her hair. "You aren't really a cold man, are you?" she asked, and he knew that all was right again. It was Josephine's fault that—momentarily—there had been a small division.

When they got out of bed to have dinner, she said, "We must write to Josephine."

"Oh no!"

"Darling, I know how you feel, but really it was a wonderful letter."

"A picture postcard then."

So they agreed on that.

Suddenly it was autumn when they arrived back in London —if not winter already, for there was ice in the rain falling on the tarmac, and they had quite forgotten how early the lights came on at home—passing Gillette and Lucozade and Smith's Crisps, and no view of the Parthenon anywhere. The BOAC posters seemed more than usually sad—BOAC *takes you there and brings you back.*

"We'll put on all the electric fires as soon as we get in," Carter said, "and it will be warm in no time at all." But when they opened the door of the apartment they found the fires were already alight. Little glows greeted them in the twilight from the depths of the living room and the bedroom.

"Some fairy has done this," Julia said.

"Not a fairy of any kind," Carter said. He had already seen the envelope on the mantelpiece addressed in black ink to *Mrs. Carter.* Julia read it aloud.

Dear Julia,

You won't mind my calling you Julia, will you? I feel we have so much in common, having loved the same man. Today was so icy-cold that I could not help thinking of how you two were returning from the sun and the warmth to a cold flat. (I know how cold the flat can be. I used to catch a chill every year when we came back from the South of France.) So I've done a very presumptuous thing. I've slipped in and put on the fires, but to show you that I'll never do such a thing again, I've hidden my key under the mat outside the front door. That's just in case your plane is held up in Rome or somewhere. I'll telephone the airport and if by some unlikely chance you haven't arrived, I'll come back and turn out the fires for safety (and economy! the rates are awful). Wishing you a very warm evening in your new home, Love from Josephine

P.S. I did notice that the coffee jar was empty, so I've left a packet of Blue Mountain in the kitchen. It's the only coffee Philip really cares for.

"Well," Julia said laughing, "she does think of everything."

"I wish she'd just leave us alone," Carter said.

"We wouldn't be warm like this, and we wouldn't have any coffee for breakfast."

"I feel that she's lurking about the place and she'll walk in any moment. Just when I'm kissing you." He kissed Julia with one careful eye on the door.

"You *are* a bit unfair, darling. After all, she's left her key under the mat."

"She might have had a duplicate made."

She closed his mouth with another kiss.

"Have you noticed how erotic an airplane makes you after a few hours?" Carter asked.

"Yes."

"I suppose it's the vibration."

"Let's do something about it, darling."

"I'll just look under the mat first, to make sure she wasn't lying."

He enjoyed marriage. So much that he blamed himself for not having married before, forgetting that in that case he would have been married to Josephine. He found Julia, who had no work of her own, almost miraculously available. There was no maid to mar their relationship with habits. As they were always together, at cocktail parties, in restaurants, at small dinner-parties, they had only to meet each other's eyes . . . Julia soon earned the reputation of being delicate and easily tired, it occurred so often that they left a cocktail party after a quarter of an hour or abandoned a dinner after the coffee—"Oh dear, I'm so sorry, such a vile headache, so stupid of me. Philip, *you* must stay . . "

"Of course I'm not going to stay."

Once they had a narrow escape from discovery on the stairs while they were laughing uncontrollably. Their host had followed them out to ask them to post a letter. Julia in the nick of time changed her laughter into what seemed to be a fit of hysterics . . .

Several weeks went by. It was a really successful marriage . . . they liked—between whiles—to discuss its success, each attributing the main merit to the other. "When I think you might have married Josephine," Julia said. "Why didn't you marry Josephine?"

"I suppose at the back of our minds we knew it wasn't going to be permanent."

"Are we going to be permanent?"

"If *we* aren't, nothing will ever be."

It was early in November that the time bombs began to go off. No doubt they had been planned to explode earlier, but Josephine had not taken into account the temporary change in his habits. Some weeks passed before he had occasion to open what they used to call the ideas-bank in the days of their closest companionship—the drawer in which he used to leave notes for stories, scraps of overheard dialogue and the like, and she would leave roughly-sketched ideas for fashion advertisements.

Directly he opened the drawer he saw her letter. It was labelled heavily *Top Secret* in black ink, with a whimsically-drawn exclamation mark in the form of a girl with big eyes (Josephine suffered in an elegant way from exophthalmic goitre) rising genie-like out of a bottle. He read the letter with extreme distaste:

> Dear, you didn't expect to find me here, did you? But after ten years I can't not now and then say, Goodnight or good morning, how are you? Bless you. Lots of love (really and truly), Your Josephine

The threat of "now and then" was unmistakable. He slammed the drawer shut and said, "Damn," so loudly that Julia looked in.

"Whatever is it, darling?"

"Josephine again."

She read the letter and said, "You know I can understand the way she feels. Poor Josephine. Are you tearing it up, darling?"

"What else do you expect me to do with it? Keep it for a Collected Edition of her letters?"

"It just seems a bit unkind."

"Me unkind to *her*? Julia, you've no idea of the sort of life that we led those last years. I can show you scars: when she was in a rage she would stub her cigarettes *anywhere*."

"She felt she was losing you, darling, and she got desperate. They are my fault really, those scars, every one of them." He could see growing in her eyes that soft amused speculative look which always led to the same thing.

Only two days passed before the next time bomb went off. When they got up Julia said, "We really ought to change the mattress. We both fall into a kind of hole in the middle."

"I hadn't noticed."

"Lots of people change the mattress every week."

"Yes. Josephine always did."

They stripped the bed and began to roll the mattress. Lying on the springs was a letter addressed to Julia. Carter saw it first and tried to push it out of sight, but Julia saw him.

"What's that?"

"Josephine of course. There'll soon be too many letters for one volume. We shall have to get them properly edited at Yale like George Eliot's."

"Darling, this is addressed to me. What were you planning to do with it?"

"Destroy it in secret."

"I thought we were going to have no secrets."

"I had counted without Josephine."

For the first time she hesitated before opening the letter. "It's certainly a bit bizarre to put a letter here. Do you think it got there accidentally?"

"Rather difficult, I should think."

She read the letter and then gave it to him. She said with relief, "Oh, she explains why. It's quite natural really."

He read:

> Dear Julia, how I hope you are basking in a really Greek sun. Don't tell Philip (Oh, but of course you wouldn't have secrets yet) but I never really cared for the South of France. Always that mistral, drying the skin. I'm glad to think you are not suffering there. We always planned to go to Greece when we could afford it, so I know Philip will be happy. I came in today to find a sketch and then remembered that the mattress hadn't been turned for at least a fortnight. We were rather distracted you know the last weeks we were together. Anyway I couldn't bear the thought of your coming back from the lotus islands and finding bumps in your bed the first night, so I've turned it for you. I'd advise you to turn it every week: otherwise a hole always develops in the middle. By the way I've put up the winter curtains and sent the summer ones to the cleaners at 153 Brompton Road. Love, Josephine

"If you remember, she wrote to me that Napoule had been heavenly," he said. "The Yale editor will have to put in a cross-reference."

"You *are* a bit cold-blooded," Julia said. "Darling, she's only trying to be helpful. After all I never knew about the curtains—or the mattress."

"I suppose you are going to write a long cosy letter in reply, full of household chat."

"She's been waiting weeks for an answer. This is an *ancient* letter."

"And I wonder how many more ancient letters there are waiting to pop out. By God, I'm going to search this flat through and through. From attic to basement."

"We don't have either."

"You know very well what I mean."

"I only know you are getting fussed in an exaggerated way. You really behave as though you are frightened of Josephine."

"Oh hell!"

Julia left the room abruptly and he tried to work. Later that day a squib went off—nothing serious, but it didn't help his mood. He wanted to find the dialling number for overseas telegrams and he discovered inserted in volume one of the directory, a complete list in alphabetical order, typed on Josephine's machine—on which O was always blurred—a complete list of the numbers he most often required. John Hughes, his oldest friend, came after Harrods; and there were the nearest taxi rank, the chemist's, the butcher's, the bank, the dry-cleaner's, the greengrocer's, the fishmonger's, his publisher and agent, Elizabeth Arden's and the local hairdresser's—marked in brackets, (For J. please note, quite reliable and very inexpensive)—it was the first time he noticed they had the same initials.

Julia who saw him discover the list said, "The angel-woman. We'll pin it up over the telephone. It's really terribly complete."

"After the crack in her last letter I'd have expected her to include Cartier's."

"Darling, it wasn't a crack. It was a bare statement of fact. If I hadn't had a little money, we would have gone to the South of France too."

"I suppose you think I married you to get to Greece."

"Don't be an owl. You don't see Josephine clearly, that's all. You twist every kindness she does."

"Kindness?"

"I expect it's the sense of guilt."

After that he really began a search. He looked in cigarette-boxes, drawers, filing-cabinets; he went through all the pockets of the suits he had left behind, he opened the back of the television-cabinet, he lifted the lid of the lavatory-cistern and even changed the roll of toilet-paper (it was quicker than

unwinding the whole thing). Julia came to look at him, as he worked in the lavatory, without her usual sympathy. He tried the pelmets (who knew what they mightn't discover when next the curtains were sent for cleaning?), he took their dirty clothes out of the basket in case something had been overlooked at the bottom. He went on hands and knees through the kitchen to look under the gas stove, and once when he found a piece of paper wrapped around a pipe, he exclaimed in a kind of triumph, but it was nothing at all—a plumber's relic. The afternoon post rattled through the letter-box and Julia called to him from the hall—"Oh good, you never told me you took in the French *Vogue*."

"I don't."

"Sorry, there's a kind of Christmas card in another envelope. A subscription's been taken out for us by Miss Josephine Heckstall-Jones. I do call that sweet of her."

"She's sold a series of drawings to them. I won't look at it."

"Darling, you are being childish. Do you expect her to stop reading your books?"

"I only want to be left alone with you. Just for a few weeks. It's not so much to ask."

"You're a bit of an egoist, darling."

He felt quiet and tired that evening, but a little relieved in mind. His search had been very thorough. In the middle of dinner he had remembered the wedding-presents, still crated in a box-cupboard for lack of room, and insisted on making sure between the courses that they were still nailed down—he knew Josephine would never have used a screwdriver for fear of injuring her fingers, and she was terrified of hammers. The peace of a solitary evening at last descended on them: the delicious calm which they knew either of them could alter at any moment with a touch of the hand. Lovers cannot postpone as married people can.

"I am grown peaceful as old age tonight," he quoted to her.

"Who wrote that?"

"Browning."

"I don't know Browning. Read me some."

He loved to read Browning aloud—he had a good voice for poetry, it was his small harmless narcissism. "Would you really like it?"

"Yes."

"I used to read to Josephine," he warned her.

"What do I care? We can't help doing *some* of the same things, can we, darling?"

"Here is something I never read to Josephine. Even though I was in love with her, it wasn't suitable. We weren't—permanent." He began:

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark Autumn evenings come . . .

He was deeply moved by his own reading. He had never loved Julia so much as at this moment. Here was home—nothing else had been other than a caravan.

. . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by firelight, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

He rather wished that Julia had really been reading, but then of course she wouldn't have been listening to him with such adorable attention.

If you join two lives, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far . . .

He turned the page and there lay a sheet of paper (he would have discovered it at once, before reading, if she had put it in an envelope), with the black neat handwriting.

> Dearest Philip, only to say goodnight to you between the pages of your favourite book—and mine. We are so lucky to have ended in the way we have. With memories in common we shall for ever be a little in touch. Love, Josephine

He flung the book and the paper on the floor. He said, "The bitch. The bloody bitch."

"I won't have you talk of her like that," Julia said with surprising strength. She picked up the paper and read it.

"What's wrong with that?" she demanded. "Do you hate memories? What's *going to happen to our memories?*"

"But don't you see the trick she's playing? Don't you understand? Are you an idiot, Julia?"

That night they lay in bed on opposite sides, not even touching with their feet. It was the first night since they had come home that they had not made love. Neither slept much. In the morning Carter found a letter in the most obvious place of all which he had somehow neglected: between the leaves of the unused single-lined foolscap on which he always wrote his stories. It began: "Darling. I'm sure you won't mind my using the old term . . ."

© Graham Greene 1963

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Argosy is proud to present a short story, written in 1898, by a young man of 24

MAN OVERBOARD

Second-Lieut. Churchill—already soldier, author, journalist—had seen action in Cuba, India and Egypt, had written his first two books, when he decided to try his hand at a short story from the Red Sea . . .

IT was a little after half-past nine when the man fell overboard. The mail steamer was hurrying through the Red Sea in the hope of making up the time which the currents of the Indian Ocean had stolen. The night was clear, though the moon was hidden behind clouds. The warm air was laden with moisture. The still surface of the waters was only broken by the movement of the great ship, from whose quarter the long, slanting undulations struck out, like the feathers from an arrow shaft, and in whose wake the froth and air bubbles churned up by the propeller trailed in a narrowing line to the darkness of the horizon.

There was a concert on board. All the passengers were glad to break the monotony of the voyage, and gathered around the piano in the companion-house. The decks were deserted. The man had been listening to the music and joining in the songs. But the room was hot, and he came out to smoke a cigarette and enjoy a breath of the wind which the speedy passage of the liner created. It was the only wind in the Red Sea that night.

The accommodation-ladder had not been unshipped since

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leaving Aden, and the man walked out on to the platform, as on to a balcony. He leaned his back against the rail and blew a puff of smoke into the air reflectively. The piano struck up a lively tune, and a voice began to sing the first verse of *The Rowdy Dowdy Boys*. The measured pulsations of the screw were a subdued but additional accompaniment. The man knew the song. It had been the rage at all the music halls, when he had started for India seven years before. It reminded him of the brilliant and busy streets he had not seen for so long, but was soon to see again. He was just going to join in the chorus, when the railing, which had been insecurely fastened, gave way suddenly with a snap, and he fell backwards into the warm water of the sea amid a great splash.

For a moment he was physically too much astonished to think. Then he realised that he must shout. He began to do this even before he rose to the surface. He achieved a hoarse, inarticulate, half-choked scream. A startled brain suggested the word "Help!" and he bawled this out lustily and with frantic effort six or seven times without stopping. Then he listened.

"Hi! hi! clear the way
For the Rowdy Dowdy Boys."

The chorus floated back to him across the smooth water, for the ship had already passed completely by. And as he heard the music a long stab of terror drove through his heart. The possibility that he would not be picked up dawned for the first time on his consciousness. The chorus started again—

"Then—I—say—boys,
Who's for a jolly spree?
Rum—tum—tiddley—um,
Who'll have a drink with me?"

"Help! help! help!" shrieked the man, in desperate fear.

"Fond of a glass now and then,
Fond of a row or noise;
Hi! hi! clear the way
For the Rowdy Dowdy Boys!"

The last words drawled out faint and fainter. The vessel was steaming fast. The beginning of the second verse was confused and broken by the ever-growing distance. The dark outline of the great hull was blurred. The stern light dwindled.

Then he set out to swim after it with furious energy, pausing every dozen strokes to shout long wild shouts. The disturbed waters of the sea began to settle again to their rest. The widening undulations became ripples. The aërated confusion of the screw fizzed itself upwards and out. The noise of motion and the sounds of life and music died away.

The liner was but a single fading light on the blackness of the waters and a dark shadow against the paler sky.

At length full realisation came to the man, and he stopped swimming. He was alone—abandoned. With the understanding his brain reeled. He began again to swim, only now instead of shouting he prayed—mad, incoherent prayers, the words stumbling into one another.

Suddenly a distant light seemed to flicker and brighten. A surge of joy and hope rushed through his mind. They were going to stop—to turn the ship and come back. And with the hope came gratitude. His prayer was answered. Broken words of thanksgiving rose to his lips. He stopped and stared after the light—his soul in his eyes. As he watched it, it grew gradually but steadily smaller. Then the man knew that his fate was certain. Despair succeeded hope. Gratitude gave place to curses. Beating the water with his arms, he raved impotently. Foul oaths burst from him, as broken as his prayers—and as unheeded.

The fit of passion passed, hurried by increasing fatigue. He became silent—silent as was the sea, for even the ripples were subsiding into the glassy smoothness of the surface. He swam on mechanically along the track of the ship, sobbing quietly to himself, in the misery of fear. And the stern light became a tiny speck, yellower but scarcely bigger than some of the stars, which here and there shone between the clouds.

Nearly twenty minutes passed, and the man's fatigue began to change to exhaustion. The overpowering sense of the inevitable pressed upon him. With the weariness came a strange comfort. He need not swim all the long way to Suez. There was another course. He would die. He would resign his existence since he was thus abandoned. He threw up his hands impulsively and sank. Down, down he went through the warm water. The physical death took hold of him and he began to drown. The pain of that savage grip recalled his anger. He fought with it furiously. Striking out with arms and legs he sought to get back to the air. It was a hard struggle, but he escaped victorious and gasping to the surface. Despair awaited him. Feebly splashing with his hands he moaned in bitter misery—" I can't—I must. O God! let me die."

The moon, then in her third quarter, pushed out from behind the concealing clouds and shed a pale, soft glitter upon the sea. Upright in the water, fifty yards away, was a black triangular object. It was a fin. It approached him slowly.

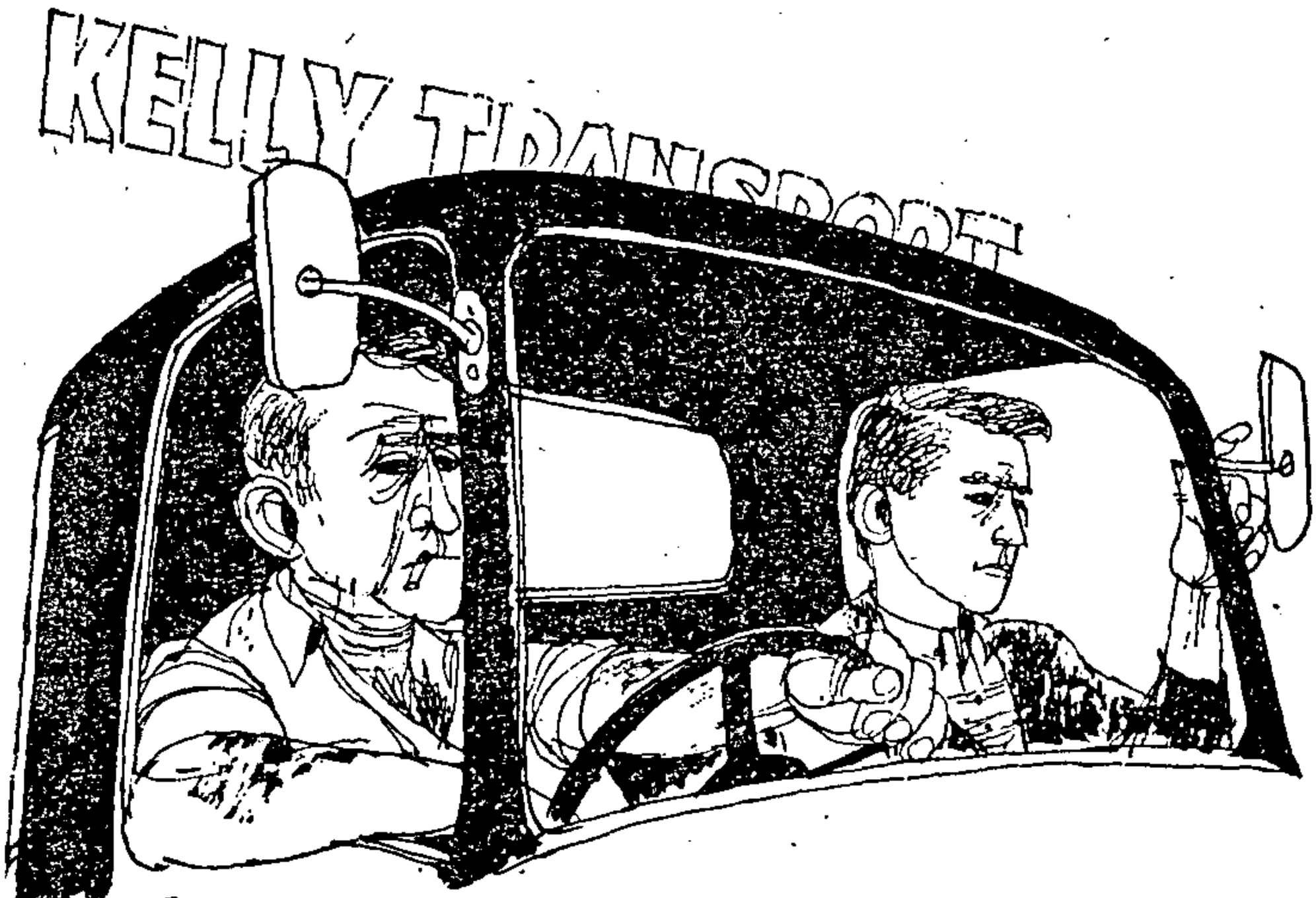
His last appeal had been heard.

We appeal to you — try to answer these ten questions correctly

1. Name the Englishman who captained the 1948/1949 side that toured South Africa.
2. Only once has Hampshire won the County Cricket Championship—in 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963 or 1964?
3. A super-fast delivery from bodyline bowler Harold Larwood, during the Third Test at Adelaide in January, 1933, knocked the Australian wicket-keeper completely unconscious: who was he?
4. Which West Indies fast bowler wrote a cricketing autobiography called *Hit Me for Six*?
5. When did the last annual Gentlemen v. Players match take place at Lord's?
6. The Pakistan cricketers have played two series of Tests against England in England, the first being in 1954. When was the second?
7. Was it Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Somerset or Sussex who became English County Cricket Champions in 1964?
8. The 1962/1963 Test series between Australia and England in Australia ended in a draw. Of the five test matches, how many did each win and how many ended in a draw?
9. Which Australian state cricket clubs have their playing headquarters in:
   (a) Brisbane. (b) Melbourne. (c) Sydney.
10. For which commonwealth countries did these three Test cricketers play:
    (a) Javed Burki. (b) Vijay Hazare. (c) Cuan McCarthy.

Had difficulty? Turn to page 109 for the answers.

Quiz compiled by Jack Kosky



A CROWN OF WEEDS

by

D'ARCY NILAND

WHEN I was twelve my father said chop that wood, and I chopped it. When I was fourteen he said go down and hock this coat, and I went. When I was sixteen he said get up and get my breakfast in the morning, and I told him to go to hell. He had never hit me before. Just the orders. He didn't have to. I obeyed them.

This time he came at me with blazing eyes, but it was a bloody good day for me, my birthday, and the end of the line, as I had for two years been promising myself it would be, and nothing was going to cruel it. He seemed surprised when I sat him down. I was, too. Then he got up and he put me down, and shouted, "Don't think you can stand up to me;

don't ever think that." Nothing was going to spoil it, not the promise I'd been waiting to keep. We fought all over the room. I was blowing blood, but suddenly I was doing all the hitting, knocking his head this way and that, and his eyes were turning, and he fell and sat looking up at me, defeated.

Well, I felt great. And that was the first of it done. The second was leaving that stinking place for ever. I took nothing. I wanted nothing. Just to be free in the world, that's all I wanted. I'd make out. I had a mate in Redfern, Pete Kelly, and he let me share his room. He wanted to get me a job, but I didn't want a job in Sydney. He lent me a fiver, and I got out on the road near Liverpool and a truck took me through to Melbourne.

He was a good bloke, that Joe, the driver. He gave me some tucker and he didn't nag his head off or ask questions. But he was tired; boy, was he tired. His face was one big tired mess. He drove half-asleep. He had seventeen ton up and roaring down that night road half-asleep. He told me not to be frightened. He said he had been doing it for years; it was just like unwinding a roller towel, nothing to it.

I said, what do you work so hard for, where is it getting you? He said what the hell else would he be doing—knitting mob caps for old maids? He had a wife and five kids and a house to pay off; he wanted a car and he was going to get it.

I hitch-hiked to Adelaide. I walked the town, living on saveloys and pies. I was fagged when I went to a dosshouse around in some street. I don't know the name. It was run by some old sheila, and she looked tired, too. The world's full of people looking tired. Don't they get enough sleep or what? She asked me how much I had, and I said not much, and she said she only had accommodation on the veranda balcony, and a bed there was five bob, but I could have one for three.

She led me up there. No lights. Just beds everywhere. I got into mine, dressed. It was hard, with only a thin blanket to cover you, just about worth what I paid. There were blokes snorting, blowing, snoring, blurting, creaking, tossing, turning, like a lot of pigs under one blanket. I saw them in the morning after a miserable sleep. Derelicts and deadbeats, all looking tired, too, but cheerful enough. Whiskers and red eyes and the battered faces that boozers and hard workers get. Like my old man.

"Hell, did I do a freeze?" one said, hugging himself. "It's me for an inside bed tonight if I can scrape up seven and six."

"Ten bob you mean, mate."

"Not to me, it ain't. Old Lollylegs has got a soft spot for me. We used to be sweethearts."

"Jeez," said a younger bloke, with a grin. "When was that, Cook's time? She's a thief, anyway, I can tell you that."

"How come?"

"I had two bloody fleas of me own when I come here last night. Now I got none."

An old bloke laughed. "You'll get 'em back in the summer, mate. With interest. They tell me the livestock'd eat you alive in this joint in the summer. But the rates go down to half a crown."

"No," another bloke said. "You got it wrong, Pop. In the summer the inside beds is two and six, and she ups these on the balcony to ten bob. She knows her business, that old duck. Capitalising on the climate, you know."

"Well, why moan? She's doing us a good turn; what would you do without her? Be thankful. All you need in life is a bit of silver lining, and it's all around you, only you blokes can't see it. Don't knock good people. There's plenty of bad bastards about, knock them."

I went down the street. I was weak in the guts, but I bought a paper and sat in the sun looking for a job. A pub wanted a kitchen man. It was gone when I got there, but the cook gave me some left-over chook and I took it into the park and polished it off. A cop walked past and looked at me. Slow he walked, and looked. It went through my head that the old man had put the police on to me. It was two weeks now. He went on, the cop. I was glad. I didn't want any trouble. Do no good, lumbering me. I'd never go back.

I went after other jobs. I got one at a service station. They gave me a uniform and told me to keep my hair brushed. A fat bloke, with veins like red threads in his cheeks, owned the place. He was always puffing a bit, and sucking pills. He had a drawer full of bottles—red, green and white pills. He was all right, though. He gave me a quid of my wages in advance. I got a decent little room in Rundle Street, with nobody to worry me. The old bloke that ran the show was a widower. He kept to himself.

A girl came to work in the office. She tried to talk to me every chance she got. I didn't mind, but I was a bit shy of her. You could smell her scent a mile away. She had long red nails and stilt heels. When she walked blokes looked at her, the way she had emphasised her natural shape, and they looked at each other and said how would she go.

Her name was Nola. One day she finally talked me into taking her to the pictures. She took me home for tea first. I met her mother and father. Tired, too, they were to look at. The old lady spilt ash and coughed all the time and talked with the fag in her mouth. The father, he was a bit of a wag, telling stories and smacking his knee every time he laughed.

When Nola went off to get ready, and the old lady went into the kitchen, coughing and banging the crockery around, the old bloke said to me on the quiet, "Like to see you have a good time, son, but I know what you young fellers are like—I was young myself once—and Nola's just a sweet kid, you know. Do the right thing, don't go getting her into trouble, will you?" I looked at him. He put his hand on my shoulder. "No offence," he said. "Mum, she worries."

As we were leaving the old lady sang out to Nola not to be coming home at all hours.

After the picture we had some coffee in a shop. We walked home. She put her arm through mine. In a dark place against a fence she stopped and put my hand on her breast. It was like putting it on a hot stove the way I snapped my hand back. She just laughed. I felt a bit of a fool.

"Don't tell me you're different from other boys," she said.

"We'd better get home. Your mother'll be worried."

"You are a boy, aren't you?"

"What do you mean?" I said, "what do you mean?"

"Nothing," she said.

"Just mind what you say, that's all."

"I didn't mean anything, honest. It just slipped out."

We walked on. Silent. She stopped to smell a hedge. It was all bull. She said, as she smelled the hedge, "I know what my father told you."

"Yeah?"

"He tells that to every boy I have. They don't take any notice."

"Well, I'm not them."

"I doubt if you could," she said.

"What?"

"Get me into trouble."

That made me angry, and I didn't know what to say to her. She looked at me teasingly. I could see the shine in her eyes in the darkness. She said quickly, "I know a place. Come on."

I went with her. She taught me. I felt like a real kid with her, and she was only eighteen. There didn't seem to be

anything she didn't know. The scary feeling hit me afterwards. And I could see her father's face, all those lines and the tired look, and him putting the trust in me.

She seemed annoyed. She said, "Ah, hell, have I got to go back to that dump?"

We walked on. "What's wrong with it?" I said. "It's a nice place. Your people think a lot of you—"

"What a stinking life!"

"How'd you like to be me?" I said. "My mother died when I was twelve. My old man just pushed me around like a slave. I've got no home at all."

"One of these days, I'll just get a boat to South America."

"Why South America?"

"Oh, anywhere, who cares?"

"I reckon you don't know when you're well off."

"What the hell would you know?"

"I know a lot."

"Oh yeah, you do, you sure do!"

Her sarcasm made me wild. "Ah, shut your mouth."

"You shut yours."

I stopped. "If that's the way you feel about it you can walk home yourself."

"Suits me fine," she said, and stomped off.

I could have gone after her and throttled her, she made me so mad. That's what they think of you. Make you feel small. Laugh at you. I knew I never wanted to see her again. I didn't want any more to do with her. She was no good, anyway; putting it over her people like that, the twicer. I felt low, too, when I thought of her old man asking me that. I'd rather have his respect than not. It made me bad-tempered, I tell you, the whole damn thing.

I didn't go back to the service station. I went to Port Pirie. I worked at pea-picking for a while, then I got a job on the wharf. The work was good. I got pally with a Greek bloke named Lycurgus Theokilos. A funny name, that—Lycurgus—a real mouthful the lot of it. He was called Ly. He was a good bloke; born in Australia and a real Aussie.

We were good cobbers, Ly and me. We used to go to Port Augusta and Broken Hill now and then, and one time we grabbed a fortnight and went out on the opal fields, but didn't do any good, though we had a lot of fun. On the opal fields Ly met a sheila from Mount Gambier, there with her sister and mother spending a holiday and noodling dumps. They were staying with the mother's brother, who lived on the field.

I took to the other sister. We used to go for walks and help them to find opal. Ly had his accordion with him, and in our tent at night we'd have a singsong. The mother was there, too. She was a good sort, a widow, who did welfare work.

One night we walked them back to their place. The mother was going ahead with the torch. Ly had his arm around his girl. I was doing the same with mine. I put my hand on her breast. I felt her freeze. She stopped and said cut that out and what did I think she was? She walked on leaving me.

We left before them, and when we were leaving with the mail truck, they took our addresses at Pirie and kissed us and told us to write to them. My girl came up to me—her name was Jeannie—and she said, "I hope I see you again some time, Wally. I'd like to." That made me feel good. In the truck going into Pimba, Ly told me his girl had said the same thing.

He looked at me. "We going to let 'em drag us down to Mount Gambier?" he said.

"What, two sheilas? Away from a good job? You off your rocker?"

"Two sheilas can drag you anywhere if you like 'em enough to want to go. Look at my old bloke."

"What about him?"

"He knew my mother in Greece. She came out here with her people. For six months he banged his head on the wall. Then he came, too. And what's that, bloody ten thousand miles to chase after a woman? He reckons it was the best move he ever made."

"What about your mother?"

"Couldn't be happier. I often wonder which of them'll kick the bucket first. I don't know what he'll do, the old bloke, if it's her."

"He'll live," I said. "My old man did."

"Yeah, I suppose so, in a kind of a way," Ly said. "But it wouldn't be the same. It'd have to change him."

"Why?" I said.

"Well, like I said, he thinks so much of her. It's only natural it'd do something to him." He looked at me. "Like your people—they hit it off, didn't they?"

"Extra good."

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"Didn't your old man feel it when your mother died? I'll bet it changed him. You, too, for that matter."

"It didn't change me."

"How do you know? You don't know."

"I know. And it didn't change him either. He was always a weakie. Dropping his bundle. Getting his chin down. Hitting the booze as a way out. Taking it out on other people—me in the end. She made two of him."

"Maybe that'd make him feel it all the more when she went."

"Ah, don't be crazy. I know what I'm talking about."

"What are you getting so het up about?"

"Who's getting het up? I'm not getting het up."

"Okay," Ly said. "Okay. Who started all this, anyway? Those two girls. Wonder if they'll keep in touch?"

"Changing me and him. Hell," I said, "that's rich."

Ly put his hat over his face and tried to snooze in the back of the rocking truck. I just thought. Rich. Real rich . . .

A month later we got a postcard each from the girls and they gave us a warm feeling. Ly sent one back straightaway. I hung on to mine for a week. I wasn't going to bother. I wasn't interested much. But Ly pressed me and I posted it. I just said what we were doing and put in a bit about the weather. I didn't know what the hell to say. They wrote again, and so it went on.

One night we had a hurry-up job loading dunnage. There was a gang below and one on top. Ly and I worked with the deck gang. We hoisted the timber and dropped it down into the hold. The ship was dark and cold with a few lights. It looked like a sepia photograph. You could hear the black water lapping against the piles. The blokes' breaths were foggy. We'd yell out *okay below?* and when they yelled back we'd let the stuff go.

The accident happened about ten o'clock, just about when we were nearly finished. Old Sammy Wilson copped it. It was nobody's fault. He just didn't get out of the road in time and the beam hit him. There were yells, yells, blokes running everywhere. We could see him down there in the lousy light, sprawled flat like a starfish and the weight on him, and blood on the floor near his mouth, sort of like dark jam.

Everybody was quiet as they brought him up, the ambulance blokes. I didn't look at poor old Sammy. I felt sick. But I heard Ly ask, and the ambulance man said his back was broken, his chest crushed; he must have been killed instantly, he said. Ly knew Sammy a long time. I didn't know him that well, just to work with, that's all. But Ly had been to his place for meals, and was more or less a friend of the family.

Big Joe Sanders said, "Who's gonna tell his missus?" Nobody moved. Then Ly said he would. He asked me if I wanted to go along with him.

We didn't talk as we went down the dark street. There was a light in every window of the house, a radio going. I felt tight across the chest. In there, enjoying themselves, they had no idea we were coming; they expected nothing like this. Old Sam had been coming home for years, in the day, in the night. Pushing that little picket gate in and out, in and out. A tall stringy bloke with big bony fists and a great laugh. It even seemed queer to me to think he wasn't coming home any more.

I said to Ly, "You won't be long. I'll wait out here."

It wasn't that I was scared to face it. It was just that it might have embarrassed them to have a stranger there when they took the news.

"Okay," Ly said. He understood.

He knocked. A woman came, and he went in and the door shut. I waited. The radio stopped. A light went out somewhere in the back. The street lamps looked like thistleheads in the fog. In a little while the front door opened and Ly sang out, "Are you there, mate? Mrs. Wilson wants us to have a cup of tea, come on."

It was warm in there. A big fire was going. Everything bright and neat; pictures on the wall, flowers, a big clock ticking. The tea things were already on a little table. Mrs. Wilson asked us to sit down. She was a dumpy woman with pretty, cloudy eyes and a face brown as a sultana, soft and withered. She poured the tea. Her big son, Norm, came in and he sat down, too. His arms were covered with ginger hair and he was going bald. He looked like a fighter.

Mrs. Wilson seemed to be trying to make a kind of cheerful talk. She said she had the kettle simmering on the stove like always because she was expecting Dad home at any time. He was going to listen to the cricket with his cuppa. Maureen was at the pictures with her boyfriend. Poor Maureen, what a shock it would be for her. The other daughter, Gladys, was visiting someone in the country. She'd be home in the morning. Just in time, poor girl, Mrs. Wilson said.

"He wasn't well all day, Dad. Sort of fluey. I didn't want him to go to work. I told him he shouldn't, but he said he'd be all right. He'd have a day in bed tomorrow, he said." She looked away from us. "Nobody knows, do they?"

I just wanted to get out of there. Ly did, too, and he stood up. He said if there was anything he could do to let him

know. Norm said he would take care of things. He came outside and down to the gate with us.

"It hasn't hit her yet," he said, and his face looked pretty strained. "But she's got plenty of spirit. She'll be all right."

"Sure, Norm," Ly said.

"Sure hard to believe he's gone," Norm said, and he seemed to want to say it. "He had his faults, who hasn't, but he was a man. 'Struth, we had our squabbles, me and him, our blues, but they didn't mean anything; except that time years ago when we got stuck into each other in a proper dingdong go and I belted the ears off him. Never stopped trying to make it up to him, that. I don't know. Bloody mad, the things you do to your own. Like I always say, you've only got one of each, and you don't have them for that long."

"Yeah," Ly said. "Well, we'll see you, mate."

We drifted off. I looked back. All the house lights but one were out. I asked Ly when Norm had that scrap with his old man. He said it was a long time ago.

"But he never stops talking about it. He'd have earbashed us all night, if we'd let him. The whole box and dice, from first punch to last, all over the backyard."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," Ly said. "Rapping up old Sam all the time he's telling it. It was youth against age, he says. He would have had no show, he says, if the old bloke had been younger, the match even, you know. Old Sam, he used to bring it up himself now and again when we had a few, but the funny thing was he didn't hold it in for Norm at all. He was sort of proud of him if anything."

I kept thinking about what Norm Wilson said. I don't know what it was, it worried me in some way somehow.

Time went on. I was pleased to be getting some money together. I had a bank account. I didn't know what I was going to do with it but I had all kinds of ideas as I saw it grow. It gave me a pretty good feeling thinking about these ideas. One idea was that we should keep on saving, me and Ly, till we got a real roll, then pool it and kick off some business, like a truck business or something like that.

But at Christmas Ly suddenly said he wanted to see his girl again. He said it after he got a letter from her. She invited us both to come down and stay with them. And Jeannie put in a postscript just saying she hoped we could make it. I felt half and half about the idea, but Ly was a starter, nothing

could stop him, so I thought I might as well go along, too.

I got word about the old man the day we were packing. Pete Kelly wrote; the one and only letter I ever had from him. He started off by thanking me for returning his dough, though I'd done that months ago, and he said he was taking a punt on the letter finding me still at Pirie. He said he happened to bump into Charlie Fletcher, a mate of my father, and Charlie told him the old bloke was pretty crook in hospital and was asking for me. Pete said he thought he better wise me up.

The news gave me a bit of a shock. It was a damned nuisance, too, coming at this time.

"It might be bad," Ly said. "I suppose you'll shoot through straight away?"

"Who said I'm going?" I said. "He's nothing to me."

"I thought you said he was the only family you had."

"Yeah, well, so what?"

"Okay, mate," Ly said. "It's your business."

But I did go. I don't know why. I just did. But I went with resentment, and it stayed with me all the way, mounting up—anger at being forced to do what I was doing. Nearly two years since I'd seen the old feller, and I didn't want to see him now, but I went.

I went to the hospital smouldering, ready for anything from him. It was a big ward; blokes in white iron beds, visitors with some of them. I walked down the floor looking, but I couldn't see him. Then I saw a bed with a figure in it lying flat, no pillow, and I went over and it was my father. He was asleep. I couldn't believe the change in him. I just stood there, staring. He had a little shrunken face like a bat. One arm was outside the bedclothes. It was like a stick poked through the coat sleeve. The hand was a claw. The bed seemed too wide for him and it wasn't a wide bed. His body was only a slight rise under the blankets, sort of flat. He was breathing hard with his mouth open, his hair any-old-how and damp with sweat. I couldn't believe it.

He opened his eyes. They just came open slowly, a bit startled-looking till he focused them. Then a faint smile came on his face, sort of quivering there. Tears slid out of the corners of his eyes. His hand moved over the bedclothes. He didn't seem able to lift it.

"Wal," he said in a whisper. "How are you, boy? You been okay?"

I just nodded. I put my hand in his and he squeezed it, without strength. He couldn't talk, only in a hoarse wheeze,

and you had to get down near his mouth to make out the words. Then he gave up. But I answered his questions, told him all about where I'd been and what I'd been doing. He just talked back with his eyes, and there was a lot he said with them. It was just like we were taking up where we left off before my mother died.

When the hour ended I went to see the doctor in charge of the ward. He sat down and talked. He was a youngish bloke, looking at nurses as they passed. I asked him to tell me straight about my father. He said he had cancer and there was no hope for him. The word shocked me. I hate that word. I asked him was he sure, could they have made a mistake? He shook his head. They were positive.

"Does he know?"

"We haven't told him yet, but I will if you like."

"No," I said. "Say nothing. I don't want you to say anything. How long, do you reckon?"

"It's hard to say. Maybe a month or two. Could be six."

"Look, doc, he's in the general ward. Is he getting the best treatment there? What about if we get the best specialist in Sydney, would that help? I can afford it."

"The best come here," he said. "The best there is. They've all seen your father. You'd only be throwing your money away." He took a long lingering look at a nurse, then smiled at me. It was all routine stuff to him. It wasn't his father in there, only a sick old crock in bed.

"He's had a bad day today," he said. "It's up and down like that, you know. I'm sure you realise we need the bed here. So what I suggest is that you put him in a home, where he'll get special care; staff trained to look after terminal cases. Or take him home, if you have someone to look after him, and have your own doctor in."

"I'll think it over," I said.

I brought him home because I thought he'd be happier there with me and among the things he knew. He stayed in bed mostly, but on his better days I got him up into a lounge chair. He sank into it, in his old dressing-gown, nothing of him, a child's body with a man's face. The doctor left tablets with me to give him for the pain.

I kept telling him we'd get him right, he'd come good, and I put hope in his eyes, but it didn't last. It came and died like a spark. I think he knew. But whether he did or he didn't know, I had to pay him; he never complained. I could have

expected him to sound off, it would have been natural. Instead, he just took it, and I couldn't make it out; it wasn't his form as I had known it. I just had to tell myself he had guts.

Anything he wanted I gave him. I tried to do everything possible so that nothing would be overlooked that could make it more easy and comfortable for him. I wanted to do it. I was driven to do it, as though I was trying to put back something I had taken away from him, and knowing there was so little time to do it in, to put it all back.

They ran out, the days, faster and faster. I felt the panic, wanting him to live, and us to be mates; yet, knowing there was no hope, wishing he would die and end his suffering. I wanted to hear about his early days, but he couldn't talk. I wanted us to go down the street together and look at some clothes maybe, but that chance was gone for ever. All the things we could do, we'd never do them now. It was too late.

Crazy, stupid life. Here I was chopping wood, running messages, cooking tucker, making beds, no sleep, waiting on him hand and foot, and even then thinking I was not doing enough—the very set-up I had run away from; and he was the one I knocked down because he was too tough on me, for what reason I don't know, and it didn't matter now. The fight came back to me; I could see him looking up at me from the floor, and when I thought of it and that broken old skeleton in there on the bed I didn't know what to do for the anguish in me. I never even left him that—the thought that he was better than me. Life beat him down. I beat him. He was beaten, beaten. I ran out on him. A bloody waste of years.

I went into him one morning and he was dead. God, he looked like a little old man, and he was only forty-five. He'd come to this. Working for a pay packet at the end of the week. Having a booze up with the boys. Nothing much more. But he was like me once. He knocked around. He played football. He met girls, and he married one. He'd come to this. Just another apple fallen from the tree. Who'd notice and who cared? Yet it had to mean something. I had to sort it out. All I felt then was a kind of peace; I hadn't felt it for a long time. And a great tiredness; and I knew I looked tired, too, as tired as all the tired people I'd ever seen: poor people; poor, poor people.

The sun was rising on another day and I sat with my dead father. I left home because of him and I made the money to come back and bury him. All of it, it had to mean something.

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INSTANT STATUS!

Allan Sherman, American funny man, feels that in this day and age everyone needs an *image*. It follows that if you have a good enough *image*, you don't need to be a person at all. With this profundity in mind, he has invented "Instant Status" — and it's within the reach of everyone.

People secretly admire you if they feel that deep down inside you are better than they are. The fact that you aren't, doesn't matter. Instant Status will make it seem so. How to achieve it? Simply by writing yourself a few letters, using the appropriate letterheads, and leaving them lying about where your friends can't help seeing them. For a start, the gentle suggestion that you have found time in your busy life to help a friend halfway round the world in his good work... Try this one on the mantelpiece:

THE SCHWEITZER CLINIC
LAMBARENE 90049
EQUATORIAL AFRICA EAST

13 June

Dear Kind Friend:

Thank you for the bandages and the chicken.

Devotedly,

AS:sa

One of the most important ways of acquiring the new Instant Status is to be someone very important. The only sure way to make people look up to you is to be some place that is higher than they are. Name-dropping is a *must*—and is accepted when acquiring Instant Status.

SIR EDMUND HILLARY

The Himalaya Hilton

Tenzing Norkey Road

Mt. Everest 9

Tibet

June 27, 1964

Dear Old Friend:

Your magnificent gesture of May 29, 1953 is something I can never forget.

Still, your insistence that your glorious achievement be kept secret from the world has troubled me over the years, for you have remained anonymous, while I have had honour heaped upon me.

I think it is time the world knew the true story.

Tenzing and I were staggered beyond belief when we arrived at the summit to find you sitting there, salting a hardboiled egg and listening to your transistor radio.

Most respectfully,

Sir Ed

This letter, Allan Sherman points out, will show the world that you are connected with people in very high places. Also they will begin to realise that you are quite a *character.* Apropos of nothing—but Status—Sherman also suggests that on your way home, while standing in the bus queue, you should always study a Jaguar Mark X Instruction Book. This is very good for the image.

INSTANT STATUS!

These days the *real* Status people never buy new things. To be really switched on, you must buy *junk*, and the older the junk the more important it becomes. At the moment, the Americans are just wild about any junk made before Columbus discovered America. If you think your friends and colleagues understand the importance of Pre-Columbian junk, start writing . . .

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE

1071 Philadelphia Avenue ❀ Washington, D.C. ❀ CApitol 1-2163

April 14

Dear Sir:

We are pleased to inform you that the piece you sent us for verification IS an authentic Toltec artifact.

It is a carving of Quetzalcoatl circa 900 A.D., not 1000, A.D. as you thought.

Respectfully,

Theodore Alexius Perper III

T.A. Perper
Artifacts Division Chief

TAP:sws

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

September 21

Dear 008:

Your country is grateful for the job you did during your "vacation" in Moscow.

We will return your trenchcoat as soon as the lab has completed its analysis of the bloodstains.

Good work!

Jack

John A. McCone

JAMcC: slr

At the moment everyone is spying—on everyone else. Not to be part of this is Un-British, Un-American and Un-Russian. *Sherman says that the letter above will not only impress your* friends and neighbours, but it will also justify all the time you spend away from home—and some of your strange behaviour.

INSTANT STATUS!

The big deal today is communications—keeping in *touch* with everyone. The image you want is that thousands of people depend on your every move—and that you must constantly keep them informed of each brilliant thought as it crosses your mind. Sherman concocted this letter for the American who dreams of becoming the big business tycoon—but it can easily be adapted for the British public.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH COMPANY, INC.
7 WALL ST., NEW YORK 1, NEW YORK

April 9

Dear

We are delighted that you are pleased with the two Princess telephones in your automobile.

We regret, however, that we will not be able to install a telephone in your horse.

Most respectfully,

Fred

Frederick Kappell,
President

FK:jek

NOBEL PRIZE COMMITTEE

Stockholm 9, Sweden

January 3rd

Dear

Sorry to have to tell you this. You placed SECOND.

Better luck next year.

Sincerely,

N. Nobel III

Norman Nobel III

NN:sp

INSTANT STATUS!

Only the very best people have achievements that are recognised by Official Recognition Committees. We suggest that you join your local Literary Society. Don't say a word for the first couple of meetings. Then show this letter to the President of the Society. Let tears come to your eyes and say, "Why can't I ever win—even once?"... remembering that in the end, status is really just one big laugh.

BRADBURY

Writes a unique new story in homage to

HEMINGWAY

RAY BRADBURY, a highly imaginative writer, pays his tribute to another great writer in a story of fantasy, yet of moving reality

THE KILIMANJARO MACHINE

I had driven the truck all night. I hadn't been able to sleep at the motel, so I thought I might as well drive on and I arrived among the mountains and hills near Ketchum and Sun Valley just as the sun came up.

I drove into the town itself without looking up at that one hill, for I was afraid if I looked at it, I would make a mistake. It was very important not to see the grave there. At least that is how I felt and I had to go on my hunch.

I parked the truck in front of an old saloon and walked around the town talking to a few people and breathing the sweet, clear air. I found a young hunter, but he was wrong. I knew that after talking to him for a few minutes. I found a very old man, but he was no better. Then I found a hunter about fifty, and he was just right. He knew, or sensed, everything I was looking for.

I bought him a beer and we talked about a lot of things, and then I bought him another beer and led him around to what I was doing here and why I wanted to talk to him. We were silent for a while and I waited—not showing my impatience—for the hunter, on his own, to bring up the past; to speak of other days three years ago, and of driving towards Sun Valley at this time or that, and what he saw and knew about a man who had once sat in this bar and drunk beer and talked about hunting or gone hunting out beyond.

And at last, looking off at the wall as if it were the highway and the mountains, the hunter gathered up his quiet voice and was ready to speak.

"That old man," he said. "Oh, that poor old man."

I waited.

"I just can't get over that old man on the road," he said.

I drank some more of my beer, feeling very old myself and tired.

When the silence prolonged itself, I got out a local map and laid it on the wooden table. The bar was quiet. It was midmorning and we were completely alone there.

"This is where you saw him most often?" I asked.

The hunter touched the map three times. "I used to see him walking here. And along there. Then he'd cut across the land here. I wanted to tell him to keep off the road. I didn't want to hurt or insult him. You don't tell a man like that about roads or maybe he'll be hit. If he's going to be hit, well that's it. You figure it's his business, and you go on. Oh, but he was old there, at the last."

"He was," I said, and folded the map and put it in my pocket.

"You another of those reporters?" said the hunter.

"Not quite *those*," I said.

"Didn't mean to lump you in with," he said.

"No apology needed," I said. "Let's just say I was one of his readers."

"Oh, he had readers all right, all kinds of readers. Even me. I don't touch books from one autumn to the next. But I touched his. I think I liked the Michigan stories best. About the fishing. I think the stories about the fishing are good. I don't think anybody ever wrote about fishing that way and maybe won't ever again. Of course, the bullfight stuff is good, too. But that's a little far off. Some of the cowpokes like them—they been around the animals all their life. A bull here or a bull there, I guess it's the same. I know one cowpoke has read just the bull stuff in the old man's Spanish stories forty times. He could go over there and fight, I swear."

"I think all of us felt," I said, "at least once in our lives, when we were young, we could go over there, after reading the bull stuff in the Spanish stories, that we could go over there and fight. Or at least jog ahead of the running of the bulls in the early morning, with a good drink waiting at the other end of the run and your best girl with you there for the long weekend."

I stopped and I laughed quietly, for my voice had, without knowing, fallen into the rhythm of his way of saying. I shook my head and was silent.

"You been up to the grave yet?" asked the hunter, as if he knew I would answer yes.

"No," I said.

That really surprised him. He tried not to show it.

"They all go up to the grave," he said.

"Not this one."

He explored around in his mind for a polite way of asking. "I mean—" he said. "Why *not*?"

"Because it's the wrong grave," I said.

"All graves are wrong graves when you come down to it," he said.

"No," I said. "There are right graves and wrong ones, just as there are good times to die and bad times."

He nodded at this. I had come back to something he knew—or at least smelled—was right.

"Sure," he said, "I knew men who died just perfect. You always felt, yes, that was good. One man I knew—sitting at the table waiting for supper, his wife in the kitchen. When she came in with a big bowl of soup, there he was sitting dead at the table. Bad for her, but I mean, wasn't that a good way for him? No sickness. No nothing—but sitting there waiting for supper to come and never knowing if it came or not.

"Like another friend. Had an old dog—fourteen years old. Dog was going blind and tired. Decided, at last, to take the dog to the pound and have him put to sleep. Loaded the old blind, tired dog on the front seat of his car. The dog licked his hand, once. The man felt awful. He drove towards the pound. On the way there, with not one sound, the dog passed away. Died on the front seat—as if he knew . . . and knowing, picked the better way. Just handed over his ghost and there you are. That's what you're talking about, right?"

I nodded.

"So you think that grave up on the hill is a wrong grave for a right man, do you?"

"That's about it," I said.

"You think there are all kinds of graves along the road for all of us?"

"Could be," I said.

"And if we could see all our life one way or another, we'd choose better?

"At the end, looking back," said the hunter, "we'd say, hell, *that* was the year and the place, not the *other* year and the other place, but that one year, that one place. Would we say that?"

"Since we have to choose or be pushed, finally," I said, "yes."

"That's a nice idea," said the hunter. "But how many of us have that much sense? Most of us don't have brains enough to leave a party when the gin runs out. We hang around."

"We hang around," I said, "and what a shame."

We ordered some more beer.

The hunter drank half the glass and wiped his mouth.

"So what can you do about wrong graves?" he said.

"Treat them as if they didn't exist," I said. "And maybe they'll go away, like a bad dream."

The hunter laughed once, a kind of cry. "God, you're crazy. But I like listening to crazy people. Blow some more."

"That's all," I said.

"Are you the Resurrection and the Life?" said the hunter.

"No."

"You going to say *Lazarus come forth*?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I just want, very late in the day," I said, "to choose right places, right times, right graves."

"Drink that drink," said the hunter. "You need it. Who in hell sent you?"

"Me," I said. "I did. And some friends who feel the same way. We all chipped in and I got picked. We bought that truck out on the street and I drove it across country. On the way I did a lot of hunting and fishing to put myself in the right frame. I was in Cuba last year. Spain the summer before. Africa the summer before that. I got a lot to think about. That's why they picked me."

"To do *what*, to do *what*, damn it?" said the hunter, agitated and shaking. "You can't do anything. It's all over."

"Most of it," I said. "Come on."

I walked to the door. The hunter sat there examining my face. At last, he grunted, got up, walked over and came outside with me.

I pointed at the kerb. We both looked at the truck parked there.

"I've seen those before," he said. "A truck like that, in a movie. Don't they hunt rhino and lions from a truck like that? Or at least travel in them around Africa?"

"You remember right."

"No lions around here," he said. "No rhino, no water buffalo, nothing."

"No?" I asked.

He didn't answer that.

I walked over and touched the open truck.

"You know what this is?"

"I'm playing dumb from here on," said the hunter. "What is it?"

I stroked the wing for a long moment.

"A Time Machine," I said.

His eyes widened and then narrowed and he sipped the beer he was carrying in one large hand. He nodded me on.

"A Time Machine," I repeated.

"I heard you," he said.

He walked out around the safari truck and stood in the street looking at it. He wouldn't look at me. He circled the truck one entire round and stood back on the kerb and looked at the cap on the petrol tank.

"What kind of mileage you get?" he said.

"I don't know yet."

"You don't know anything," he said.

"This is the first trip," I said. "I won't know until it's over."

"What do you fuel a thing like that with?" he said.

I was silent.

"What kind of stuff you put *in*?" he asked.

I could have said: reading late at night, reading many nights over the years until almost morning, reading up the mountains in the snow or reading at noon in Pamplona, or reading by the streams or out in a boat somewhere along the Florida coast.

Or I could have said: all of us put our hands on the machine. All of us thought about it and bought it and touched it and put our love in it and our remembering what his words did to us twenty years or twenty-five or thirty years ago. There's a lot of life and remembering and love put by here, and that's the petrol or the fuel or whatever you want to call it—the rain in Paris, the sun in Madrid, the snow in the high Alps, the smoke off the guns in the Tyrol, the shine of light off the Gulf stream, the explosion of bombs or explosions of leapt fish. That's the petrol or the fuel or the stuff here. I should have said that. I thought it, but I let it stay unsaid.

The hunter must have known my thought, for he walked over and did an unexpected thing. He reached out and... *touched*... my machine.

He laid his hand on it and left it there, as if feeling for the

life, and approving what he sensed beneath his hand. He stood that way for a long time.

Then he turned without a word, not looking at me, and went back into the bar and sat drinking alone, his back turned towards the door.

It seemed a good time to go, to try.

I got in the truck, started the engine and drove away. I kept on the road and didn't look right or left. I drove for what must have been an hour, first this direction and then that, part of the time my eyes shut for full seconds, taking a chance I might go off and get hurt or killed.

And then, just before noon, with the clouds over the sun, suddenly I knew it was all right.

I looked up at the hill and I almost yelled.

The grave was gone.

I drove down into a little hollow just then and on the road ahead, wandering along by himself, was an old man in a heavy sweater.

I gentled the safari truck until I was pacing him as he walked. I saw he was wearing steel-rimmed glasses and for a long moment we moved together, each ignoring the other until I called his name.

He hesitated, and then walked on.

I caught up with him in the truck. He stopped and waited.

I braked the car and sat there in the front seat. He came over and stood near the door.

"Do I know you?"

"No. But I know you."

He looked me in the eyes and studied my face and mouth. "Yes. I think you do."

"I saw you on the road. I think I'm going your way. Want a lift?"

"It's good walking this time of day," he said. "Thanks." He started off.

"Let me tell you where I'm going," I said.

He stopped and, without looking at me, said, "Where?"

"A long way."

"It sounds long, the way you say it. Can't you make it shorter?"

"No. A long way," I said. "About ten or eleven years."

He came back and looked into the car.

"Not miles, but years?"

"Not miles but years."

"Is that how far you're going?"
"That's how far."
"In which direction? Ahead?"
"Don't you want to go ahead?"
He looked at the sky. "I don't know. I'm not sure."
"It's not ahead," I said. "It's back."
His eyes took on a different look. It was a subtle shift, a flex, like a man stepping out from the shade of a tree into sunlight on a cloudy day.
"Back?"
"Somewhere between three thousand and four thousand days, split half a day, give or take an hour, borrow or loan a minute, haggle over a second," I said.
"You really talk," he said.
"Compulsive," I said.
"You'd make a lousy writer," he said. "I never knew a writer yet was a good talker."
"That's my albatross," I said.
"Back?" He weighed the word.
"I'm turning the car round," I said. "And I'm going back down the road."
"Is it that kind of car?"
"That's how it's built."
"You're an inventor then?"
"A reader who happens to invent."
"If the car works, that's some car you got there."
"At your service," I said.
"And when you get where you're going," said the old man —putting his hand on the door and leaning, and then seeing what he had done taking his hand away and standing taller to speak to me—"where will you be?"
"January 24th, 1954."
"That's quite a date," he said.
"It is. It was. It can be more of a date."
Without moving, his eyes took another step out into fuller light. "And where will you be on that date?"
"Africa," I said. "Not far from Nairobi."
He nodded once, slowly.
I waited.
"And when we get there, if we go?" he said.
"I leave you there."
"And then?"
"That's all."
"That's all?"

"For ever," I said.

The old man breathed out and in, and ran his hand over the edge of the door.

"This car," he said, "somewhere along the way, does it turn into a plane?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Somewhere along the way do you turn into my pilot?"

"It could be. I've never done this before."

"But you're willing to try?"

I nodded. He leaned in and stared me directly in the face.

"Why?" he said.

Old man, I thought, I can't tell you why. Don't ask me.

He withdrew, sensing he had gone too far.

"I didn't say it," he said.

"You didn't say it," I said.

"And when you bring the plane in for a forced landing," he said, "will you land a little differently this time?"

"Different, yes."

"A little harder?"

"I'll see what can be done."

"And will I be thrown out, but the rest of you okay?"

"The odds are in favour."

He looked up at the hill where there was no grave. I looked at the same hill.

He gazed back down the road at the mountains and the sea that could not be seen beyond the mountains and a continent beyond the sea.

"That's a good day you're talking about."

"The best."

"And a good hour and a good second."

"Really, nothing better."

"Worth thinking about."

His hand lay on the door, not leaning, but testing, feeling, touching, tremulous. Then . . .

"Yes."

"Yes?" I said.

"I think," he said, "I'll grab a lift with you."

I waited one heartbeat, then reached over and opened the door.

He got in the front seat and quietly shut the door without slamming it. He sat there, very old and very tired.

I waited.

"Start her up," he said.

I started the engine.

"Turn her round," he said.

I turned the car so it was going back on the road.

"Is this really," he said, "that kind of car?"

"Really, that kind of car."

He looked out at the land and the mountains and a distant house.

I waited, the engine idling.

"When we get there," he said. "Will you remember something . . .?"

"I'll try."

"There's a mountain . . ." he said, and stopped.

There is a mountain in Africa named Kilimanjaro, I thought. And on the western slope of that mountain was once found the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard. No-one has ever explained what the leopard was seeking at that altitude.

We will put you up on that same slope, I thought, on Kilimanjaro, near the leopard and write your name and under it say, nobody knew what he was doing here so high, but here he is. And write the date born and died, and go away down towards the hot summer grass and let mainly dark warriors and white hunters and swift okapis know the grave.

The old man shaded his eyes looking at the road winding away over the hills. He nodded.

"Let's go," he said.

And we motored away, myself at the wheel, going slow and the old man beside me. As we went down the first hill and topped the next, the sun came out full and the wind smelled of fire. We ran like a lion in the long grass. Rivers and streams flashed by. I wished we might stop for one hour and wade and fish and lie by the stream, frying the fish and talking or not talking. But if we stopped, we might never go on again. I gunned the engine. It made a great, fierce, wondrous animal's roar. The old man grinned.

"It's going to be a great day!" he shouted.

"A great day!"

How must it be now, I thought, back on the road, and us disappearing? And now, us gone? And now, the road empty. Sun Valley quiet in the sun. What must it be, having us gone?

I had the car up to 90 and we both yelled like boys. After that I didn't know anything.

"By God," said the old man, towards the end. "You know? I think we're . . . flying?"

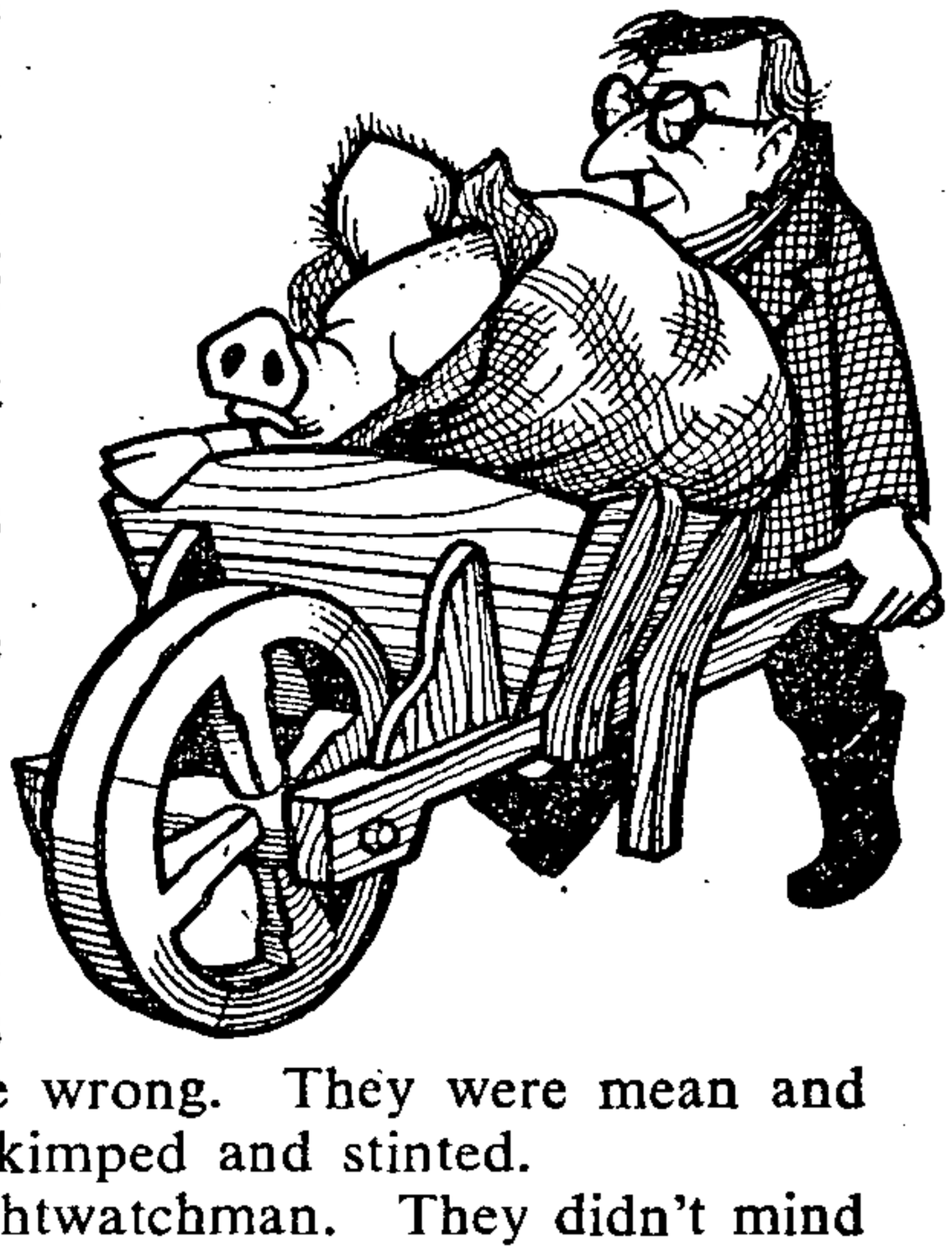
© Ray Bradbury 1965

SKINFLINT BARKA

by Jan Werich

THERE'S nothing so deceptive as a name, particularly when it's the name of a village. Take Cut Throat Hill, now. Anybody who's afraid to go up Cut Throat Hill is just wasting his time, because no more throats get cut up Cut Throat Hill than anywhere else, and there are statistics to prove it.

Not far from Constantine Spa there's a village called Tuesday. If you turn up there on a Wednesday you'll find you're back in Tuesday—six days in the week that village is just telling lies. Now the name of the village of Handout was just such a liar—in the days when Handout was still a village—and to get from Handout to Prague you had to go through the Sand Gate or else a long way round . . . You might say: Handout, that's hand out. The people there must be falling over themselves in their generosity. You'd be wrong. They were mean and miserly. They pinched and skimped and stinted.



They didn't even keep a nightwatchman. They didn't mind in the least not knowing how time passed in the night. Time's money, they said, if you have to pay a man to watch it. The parish clerk was glad, because he used to go poaching in the Royal Deer Park. As long as they didn't keep a nightwatchman he had no fear of meeting anyone at night.

When the blacksmith had to shoe a horse he took the shoe off the right hind leg to put on the left foreleg, that shoe went on to the left hind leg, and the shoe off the left hind leg went on to the right foreleg, until the poor mare had none . . .

The most miserly skinflint of the lot was Barka, the priest's cook, and everybody knew it. Not only did she save sausage skins to make curtains from: not only was she afraid of looking in the mirror so as not to wear it out; she it was, one day on the way to Louny in the stagecoach, who instead of buying a ticket to be clipped, asked for a clip on the ear—which she didn't get for the simple reason that when the driver looked at her ear he said she'd better ride free and not expect him to lower himself that far.

Now one morning the priest said to Barka, "What if we were to give away the second pig . . ."

"Not on your life!"

"Wait a minute, Barka. I was thinking of the teacher, he's got so many children, and one pig's enough for us."

"What do they want to have so many children for?"

"What else can the poor man do? People are too mean even to have children in this place; if he wants to have anybody to teach he's got to provide them himself."

"If you must squander, we'll give him some of the chitterlings, your reverence."

"You can say what you like; two pigs is too much for two people," the priest insisted weakly.

Now it's interesting to note that about the same time the teacher was coming to the same conclusion. He said to himself: Here I've got a row of hungry mouths to feed, like organ pipes, and up at the rectory there's two pigs for two people. Then he frowned. The more he frowned the harder he thought. When his face cleared, he put a nail and a hammer in his pocket, and said he was going out for a breath of fresh ozone.

The priest had kept a sheepdog, as a watchdog, but Barka had starved the poor thing to death. That came in handy for the teacher, now. He crept up to the rectory from the woods, and there wasn't a soul to know. Not a bark when he came over from the wood, nor when he slipped into the pigsty. The bigger pig must have been having a pleasant dream, because it was dribbling and every now and again it grunted like a man swilling beer. The other pig was sleeping like a log. When the teacher held the nail between its eyes the creature's cheek twitched the tiniest bit. The teacher felt for

his hammer—and don't ask me to describe how smoothly the nail went into that piggy head . . .

Next morning Barka woke up the priest saying, "The little pig's kicked the bucket!"

The priest was sleepy and said, "What did you let it into the kitchen for?"

"Bless my soul, it's not kicking round the kitchen; it's dead and done for!"

"Then you must have starved it to death, woman." And the priest yawned and turned his face to the wall.

Barka went trotting off to the teacher's. Would he be so kind and the priest sends his compliments, to bury a pig that died in the night? She lied, so as not to start a panic in the ranks of the pigkeepers. A pig died quietly in the night and people were evil-tongued enough to say the priest was trying to hush up swine-fever.

"Of course, Barka, with pleasure, anything to oblige you." The teacher took a sack and a wheelbarrow and went to fetch the pig and bury it somewhere quietly.

That day smoke started pouring from the teacher's chimney, and did not stop pouring. When Barka met the teacher's son, Tony, at the well, and asked him why they were wasting so much fuel when the frosts hadn't started yet, Tony pretended not to hear; but Barka made good note of the fact that there was grease on his chin.

On the way back to the rectory with the water splashing

in her pail, Barka set it down every third step and thought hard: what could the teacher's family be cooking—good-for-nothing lot they were? If Tony'd got grease on his chin it must have been from something fat. Could it be the pig, when had it sickened? Or hadn't it sickened, after all? When she came to think of it, the teacher had been mighty ready and willing . . .

It gave her no peace.

As soon as it began to get dark Barka crept round the church and over to the school. There was a light in the front room and smoke was coming from the chimney; Barka sniffed and snuffed, and it smelt like pork! Now she caught a whiff of sauerkraut, now a breath of crackling!

She lifted the latch and slipped carefully into the passage. At the end of the passage was a door, and over the door a fanlight you could open to air the room. Barka shuffled up to the door and listened. Feasting, all right; they'd probably gobbled the lot by now. Knives and forks clattering on plates under the chatter of children's voices and laughter—what the devil were they eating?

She pulled up a crate that stood in a corner, took down a wooden pail that was hanging on the wall, and turned it upside-down on top of the crate; then she clambered up to get a look through the fanlight and make sure. She came just too late: the teacher's wife was clearing away the plates and the children were standing in a row like a guard of honour.

The teacher was just finishing grace: "...And now let us pray for Barka as well."

Barka pricked up her ears. She stretched as high as she could, standing on tiptoe on the pail, like a ballet-dancer.

"Make her less miserly," said the eldest, Sophie.

After her came Pippa, "Make her less envious."

"And less dirty—" that was Thomas.

"—and her hair less tangly," said the even younger Xavier.

The still younger Felix added, "Make her less ugly."

Bobby: "Don't let her starve little piggies to death."

Rose: "And little kittens and—"

Libuse: "—little puppydogs."

"And let her stop eating wriggly worms," Tony of the greasy chin brought up the rear.

Barka was blind with fury. It was the worms that put the finishing touch.

She raised her fist to shake it at them, forgetting that she was standing on tiptoe on an upturned pail on a crate, and half hanging on to the lintel. Before she could get an angry word out, the world fell to pieces beneath her. The pail flew sideways, Barka's feet flew upwards, her chin caught the edge of the lintel, she let out a yell and fell flat on her back on the stone floor of the passage, as if she'd had a ladder knocked from under her.

There they found her, laid out stiff.

They said something to the children about Barka fainting, and sent them off to bed. The trouble was, Barka's faint was lasting too long for it to be just a faint.

"It looks to me as though she's done for," the teacher whispered to his wife.

"You'd better run and fetch the priest."

"That's all very well—what am I going to say to him? Everybody will say we killed her because she had a hand in us getting the pig...you know what people are like."

His wife lost her head and suggested to the teacher that they should flee the country, or set fire to the house, and similar bright ideas. The teacher paid no attention to her; he picked up the sack that had held the pig, stuffed Barka into it, threw it over his shoulder and set off.

"Wherever are you going, Lad? Laddy darling, they'll catch you and I'll never see you again," his wife flung her arms round his neck.

"'I'll be back in a minute," he comforted her. "Don't open the door to anybody," and the darkness swallowed him up.

He was not very clear what he was going to do with Barka. He thought of propping her up by the well, but Bures came reeling out of the pub and almost ran into him. He also considered carrying her up the bell-tower; when they found her they'd think she'd been looking for pigeons' eggs, which she was known to do, and had got a crack on the nut from the bell. He was just going off in the direction of the bell-tower when he thought of Kubat.

For the sake of a farthing, Kubat would chase a flea across a stubble-field. Night after night he went to his barn to make sure nobody was stealing his corn; but he'd hardly settled down there to watch before he was seized with misgivings—somebody might be robbing his cottage; off he went home again. After running about all night he spent the day asleep. He said he saved money that way, because it didn't pay to be awake during the day with things as dear as they were...

The teacher waited for Kubat to hurry back from the barn to his cottage. Then he sat Barka down by a heap of corn, propped her up with a shovel so she wouldn't topple over, and was back home in a jiffy.

Kubat was on watch in his cottage. About half an hour later he got the usual scare about his corn and dashed off to the barn. And did you ever hear such a thing? He caught the thief red-handed, shovel in hand, in the act of stealing from the poor! "You blackguard!" Kubat picked up his flail and BANG! BANG! The thief fell prostrate.

"Don't you move!"

You bet, he didn't. I mean, *she* didn't. Not until he struck a match did Kubat realise that the thief was not a he, but a she, and that she was Barka—Barka from the rectory.

"Woman alive, whatever's the idea?"

Barka didn't make a sound.

"Hey, you, wake up!" He began shaking her good and proper. "Surely I haven't... for goodness' sake, Barka!"

Barka didn't make a sound.

Now they were both sitting there in the barn, staring at each other—only Barka couldn't see Kubat. Kubat was at his wits' end. What was he to do with her? They'd find her there and say he'd killed her out of miserliness; you know what people are. What was he to do with her?

Of all the ideas that came into his head, a very malicious one tickled his fancy most. He remembered that the teacher never locked his door, so he could carry Barka into the school and

sit her in one of the benches. The teacher would be surprised to find an extra pupil in class.

Once again Barka was in a sack, once again she was carried through the darkness. Just as Kubat turned into the chestnut avenue leading towards the Deer Park he almost ran into a man coming up from the Park. The other man had a sack on his back, too. When he caught sight of Kubat he let out a yell, dropped his sack, and disappeared into the darkness. So did Kubat.

Now they were both hiding, each behind a chestnut tree, and neither could see the other for the dark, and in between them lay two sacks on the road. They were waiting to see what would happen. Nothing . . .

They waited and waited, until at last one of them—it was Kubat—decided to risk it. Out he jumped, grabbed a sack and dashed off for all he was worth. When the other saw him go he breathed a sigh of relief, picked up the other sack, and hurried off just as fast.

It was the parish clerk of Handout. He'd been poaching in the Deer Park and was just taking a fine young deer home. Only something had gone wrong. The parish clerk had got a sack on his back, it's true, but he'd got the sack that Kubat dropped, while Kubat had made off with the sack containing the parish clerk's deer.

And so it came about that under cover of darkness Kubat put a deer into the schoolroom instead of Barka, while at that moment the parish clerk was going into the kitchen and saying to his wife, "Just you look at what I've brought home today!"

It's no surprise to us that Barka from the rectory came rolling out of the sack, because we know how it happened. But the clerk's wife didn't know, and when she saw Barka doing roly-poly like that she came over queer and fell down flat.

Here they were, the two women lying side by side on the floor like two logs of wood. The parish clerk had been a sergeant-major in the Dragoons and seen a thing or two. Fairly calmly he picked up a pail of water and flung it over his wife. Naturally some of it fell on Barka.

The parish clerk's wife sat up, Barka sat up, the parish clerk's wife stood up, Barka stood up. The parish clerk's wife started to scream; Barka didn't wait to hear it and dashed out through the door into the night.

Next morning before school began, the teacher found a deer

in the classroom. It was sitting in the front bench. For a while he was puzzled about it, then he said to himself that those that ask no questions don't get told no lies, and took the creature into the larder for the venison to hang properly.

He'd only just got rid of it when Kubat called to him to come out into the road. Hadn't he heard anything in the night, meaning the teacher? No, he didn't hear anything. Did Kubat hear something? He, he hadn't heard anything either. Why did he come asking about it then? Just by way of conversation.

The bell began to ring for mass and the priest, regular as clockwork, came out of the rectory. Seeing Kubat and the teacher together he hurried towards them and called out, "Have you heard about our Barka?"

The two men's hearts stood still.

"Just imagine," the priest went on, "just imagine, two great big lumps have come up on her head overnight."

"Has something bitten her?" the teacher asked tentatively.

"They look as if a flail had caught her. She says she had a nightmare and got so restless in bed that a pewter candlestick fell on her head. Now she's got such a headache she can hardly see."

"What does the doctor say?" Kubat was relieved.

"No need to waste money on doctors. With God's help, she'll get over it."

And without God's help, the teacher thought to himself.

The priest was growing smaller in the distance and Kubat and the teacher gazed after him in silence. There was a cold wind blowing from the Prague direction, and a dirty blanket of unspent snow hung low over the countryside. A solitary flake fell cold on the back of Kubat's neck and he yawned. He gave a look at the sky and went slowly home. The teacher hung about outside for a few minutes, then went in to put more wood on the fire.

The flakes fell thicker and thicker, and a new day began in Handout.

And that's the end, really. If you thought Barka was going to turn over a new leaf and stop being miserly, or that the stolen pig was going to lie heavy on the teacher's stomach and his conscience, or that Kubat came to his senses, or that his reverence became more reverent, or that the people of Handout voted to change its name to Cheesepare, then you ought to have read a fairy-tale and not this true story . . .

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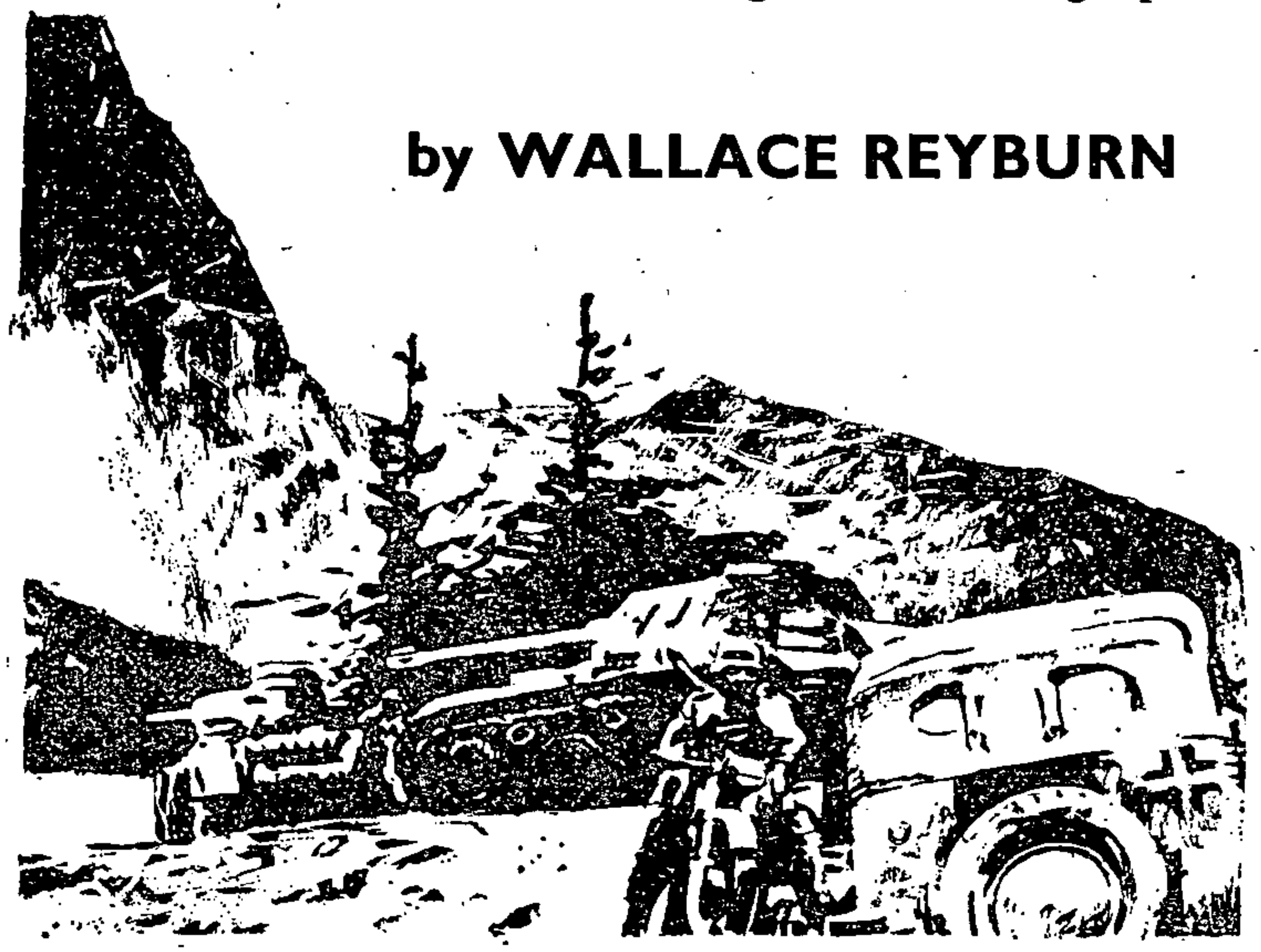
TO MAKE AMENDS

Written for Argosy—a story of conflicting loyalties that can confront men at war

by WALLACE REYBURN



I can write this now, because I am in hospital and although the doctors haven't told me in as many words, I know I won't get out of here alive.

I have been living for the past twenty years under the assumed name of Paul Desjardins: my real name is Maurice Labelle. I was born and brought up in Montreal. I worked there for the *Globe* and when the war came they sent me overseas as a war correspondent.

After a sojourn in the south of England with the Canadian Army, I went with the First Division to Italy and our advance up the Adriatic coast eventually got bogged down at a place called Ortona.

Italy was a hell of a place to fight in. Running up the

centre of the skinny country you have the Apennines, where it was quite impossible to carry on organised warfare. The Allies had no option but to make what progress they could up the narrow coastal strip on each side.

While we were held up at Ortona the rest of the Allies were stuck at Cassino, over on the other side of the jagged mountain range. From a story point of view Ortona was as dead as a doornail. Stalemate, nothing to write about. But a new attack was planned on Cassino, so I decided to go over there.

Lieutenant George Hutton loaded up a jeep and we set off up the mountain roads.

I should perhaps explain that a war correspondent is a non-combatant. Although in uniform and attached to the army, he is not *in* the army. So, when moving about the battlefronts he must have with him someone with army authority—a conducting officer.

George Hutton was mine and one couldn't have wished for a better one. He was a good-looking fellow, perky, glib (he was an insurance salesman in peacetime), humorous, coarse, totally without fear and thoroughly likeable.

Even without a war on, getting up and over the Apennines was hazardous enough. The narrow roads clung to the face of the steep slopes, with nothing between you and a sheer drop but stone markers along the outer side as a warning—but not

a protection—against skidding over the edge. Occasionally you'd come across one of the squalid hill towns, but for the most part it was deserted up there. Quiet, peaceful—and forlorn.

Thankfully I trusted George's driving, except when the road curved around a spur and you didn't quite know what was on the other side. I thought he took these a bit fast. If the road cut back sharply around the corner I envisaged our going straight on and sailing into space.

"Oh, Christ!" George jammed on the brakes as we came to one of these bends. "Germans. Up ahead."

"How far?" I asked him.

"Quite a way, thank God." George was backing up. "A convoy, halted by the side of the road."

"Did they see us?"

"Can't say."

"What do we do?"

"We're getting the hell out of here."

He had reversed far enough into the inward curve of the road to be able to turn the jeep around without our being seen from ahead. Then he started flat out back down the road.

"Even if they did get a look at us, they'll never catch us," he said. "They were way over on the other side of a big swing in the road. What the devil were they doing there? I thought this road was clear."

Then at the same time the two of us saw the other German vehicles—coming up the road towards us. It was just a brief sight of them because our part of the road curved in again and put them out of our field of view.

George braked and the jeep weaved to a skidding stop.

He looked at me and grinned. "We've had it, chum."

I didn't feel like grinning. I was scared.

"We just sit here?" I asked. "And let them get us?"

"Like hell we do."

George was out of the jeep. He had grabbed his gun belt and hooked it on.

"Get out, quick." He reached under the driver's seat and brought out a Luger. "Take this. Help me get stuff out of the jeep."

"What are we going to do?"

"We're getting rid of this jeep, for a start."

I helped him as we took out his map case, our water bottles, a haversack of rations, his field glasses.

"But if we haven't any transport we'll be sunk," I protested.

"This jeep's a dead giveaway. Got to get rid of it. Take this stuff over there and get under cover."

He pointed to the shrubs and bushes on the slope. He was watching the bit of cliff that jutted out between us and the oncoming Germans. If they appeared around there that was the end of us. I dashed across the road, laden with the things, and got in among the shrubs.

When I looked back to George he was standing by the jeep, its front wheels on the verge, precariously balanced. He gave it a shove, leaned over to watch it drop, then ran across to join me.

"Come on. Farther up the hill," he said. And then when we plopped down under cover of the scraggy bushes, from where we could see the road, he said, "The jeep'll be okay there. Kicked up a bit of dust on the way down but I don't think they could have spotted it."

"What's the score now?" I asked him.

"We just wait..."

In a little while we could hear the sound of vehicles. Then we saw them come around the corner—an armoured car and two motor-cyclists.

I'd seen Germans before. Closer up than this, even. But they'd been captured Germans. Nothing to worry about. This was different. George glanced around at me. I was finding it hard to conceal my anxiety as we watched the little convoy going past, travelling at speed.

"We'll just hang on here," George whispered, "and then you'll see—that convoy up the road will start coming down. This scout car is a recce that went ahead to see that everything was clear."

"We shouldn't have ditched the jeep," I said. "We could have got it up here somehow and hidden it. We could go hell for leather down the road now."

"You're crazy. Do you think they'd send only one scout car ahead? There'll be a batch of stuff down the road there holding the position until the main convoy can come through."

"Well, why didn't we pass them on the way up?"

"God knows. We must have come on to this road by a side road and landed ourselves right in the middle between them."

George was right about the convoy. In due course it started trundling down—trucks full of troops, other trucks with equipment, Volkswagens, weapon-carriers, a mobile kitchen, despatch riders.

We could see some of the men, in their dusty field-grey uniforms, taking in the scenery. They would look idly across the broad valley and then up the slope in our direction. I wished the convoy was sending up more of a dust screen. I felt naked.

"Just keep still," George hissed in my ear. "They can't see us in among this stuff." Then in a moment he added: "Unless they stop for a pee parade. Then we're in trouble."

The convoy never seemed to end. I was getting cramp from keeping in the same position. But at length we saw the last of it disappear around the bend and thankfully I flexed my legs. The sound of the convoy died away. The countryside reverted to its peaceful-seeming quiet.

"I can't figure out what road this is," George said as he studied the map. "Can't see anything that looks like it."

"Perhaps it's not on that map."

"Maybe not. But one thing I know—if the Germans are using it, it's *out*, far as we're concerned." He looked up the slope. "We'll have to head for the hinterland."

"Where do we get to up there?"

"No idea. But there are no Germans there, that's for sure."

We shared the haversack and other things for easier carrying and headed up to the open stretch of ground, bereft of trees or any other sort of vegetation but with plenty of cover for us among the big rocks and crevices in the sun-baked soil.

When we had confirmed that there was not a soul up there, let alone Germans, George called a halt and got out the map again.

"We might be here," he said, with his finger on the map. He moved it over a couple of inches. "Then, again, we might be here."

"You don't *know*?" I said.

"No, I don't know. But one thing's certain; we aren't going to strike north, into Jerry country." He looked at the sun and checked his watch. "I figure that's south," he said, pointing. "Our best bet is to head west a bit more and then go south. Come on."

I was glad, at nightfall, that George had insisted I get our coats out of the jeep. The night air was damned cold and we huddled under our coats in a crack in the huge rocks almost large enough to qualify as a cave.

In the morning we walked with the early sun over our left shoulders, which meant, roughly speaking, we were going

south-west. We had to press on, to come in sight of something identifiable—a road, a town, a river, a railway track—so that we could find our bearings.

With each stretch of high ground we came to, we said to ourselves—on the other side for sure there'll be something... But it wasn't until around noon that we breasted a ridge, and it was like coming upon Shangri-La. The soil in the valley beyond was obviously more co-operative than elsewhere. There were olive groves, some vineyards and crops in the fields.

The road that led from the north into this valley forked about halfway down, where a lesser road wound up the slope to a hill town. The main road carried on and was lost to view from us as it weaved its way through the valley.

You didn't need to be a military expert to see what the set-up was down below. The Germans were ranged on the near side of the fork in the road and obviously somewhere along that route through the valley were our own people. We could see through the glasses that in the town there were no troops or army transport. Quite clearly the Germans didn't want the place. Why be a sitting target up there for enemy artillery? And obviously for the same reason our troops had kept away from it.

After a long session with the glasses, George said, "You realise what's going on down there?"

"What?"

"Take a look for yourself. Italians are crossing back and forth across the German line and nobody ever stops them."

Through the glasses I watched a group of Italians with a couple of donkeys passing a German sentry by the roadside without any formality other than a waved greeting.

I lowered the glasses. "Well, what are you thinking?"

"That's how we're going to get out of here."

"You're crazy!"

"It's a cinch. We'll get some clothes. We'll—"

"Where will we get Italian clothes?"

George indicated the farmhouses dotted around the slopes of the valley. "We'll get some clothes. We'll ditch our uniforms. And we'll just walk across."

"And supposing they stop us? Just because we haven't seen anyone stopped yet, it doesn't mean some of them aren't."

"Your Italian's good."

"But what about yours? All you know in Italian is *Quanto costa, signorina?* No. It's no good."

"It'll work. If they stop us I'll play dumb. I'll be the local village idiot. You'll do all the talking."

"It's not only that," I said. "Putting on civilian clothes—it's too damned risky. If we get caught in civvies you know what that means. They can put us up against a wall and shoot us. Quite within their rights."

"So what do we do?" said George. "We give ourselves up? The hell with that. I'm not going to spend the rest of the war in a prisoner-of-war camp. I'm getting out of here. This is the way to do it. If you don't want to, I'll do it on my own."

He talked me into it.

We picked an isolated house that looked the best one for us to raid, and then waited until late afternoon. That would be the time to make our crossing: there would be a lot of movement of Italians then, the men coming back to town from their work outdoors.

We found only women in the house and a couple of kids. I stuck the Luger in the guts of the woman who seemed to be head of the family and told her if any of them said anything to the Germans we'd be back to shoot the lot of them.

They were scared skinny and couldn't be quick enough about leading us to the men's spare clothes. We didn't need much. Just shirts and trousers and boots—enough to make us look like the men around the place. Then George bundled the women and the two kids (wide-eyed, but not as scared as the women) into the cellar and locked the door.

Back at our hiding-place we got into the clothes. Not all of them were a good fit. George's boots were agony. But we weren't going to be wearing the stuff that long. He insisted that as well as our uniforms we get rid of our underwear, our issue socks, everything that had any sort of link with the Canadian Army, and we stashed it all away in a crevice in the rocks—even George's service revolver. But he kept the Luger.

We looked genuine enough. Being unshaven helped. Always the Italian peasants seem to have stubble. Luckily both of us were dark. If we'd been fair-haired we would never have tried it.

"We walk down along the road," said George in his final briefing before we set out. "And when we get to the turn-off we take the road up to the town. We lie low there and then when it gets dark we make for our lines. Okay?"

"Okay," I said, but not with conviction. I'd never felt so nervous. Much more so than when I'd seen my first action

there in Italy. Visiting the front for the first time I had known I could always pull out if the going got too rough. But here, in this exercise, once we had committed ourselves to it there was no turning back.

We made our way down the hill and through the trees, and then between us and the road there was only an empty field. We were to be Italian peasants the moment we stepped out on to that open stretch.

George had been collecting sticks as we came through the trees and got me to do the same. "Faggots," he explained. "Peasants coming home always carry bundles of sticks."

He was right. It would make us look that much more genuine. No coal, gas or electricity up there. The peasants took every chance to collect firewood.

George was bright, there was no doubt about that. When we were changing our clothes he had taken a handful of garlic cloves from his pocket. "I got these when we were in the house." He handed me one and told me to bite into it. "If we're supposed to be Italians we've got to smell like them."

We paused on the edge of the field. But there was no point in holding back now. We had to take the plunge sooner or later. Better sooner, because, as George had said, the great thing was not to be furtive, to act as though we had every right to be there.

He set off boldly and I stepped out behind him. My heart was racing. We were so exposed that every second I expected either shouts of "*Achtung!*" from the Germans down in the hollow or somebody dashing out of the house above and screaming "*Inglesi!*" to them. But nobody seemed to take the slightest notice of us. We reached the road and started off towards the intersection, some half mile away.

Getting closer we could see that what we'd surmised through the glasses was correct. It wasn't a large concentration of troops. Probably just an advance party. But as we approached the first group of Germans, the butterflies were flapping in my stomach.

I glanced at George. He had assumed his moron pose. But, thank God, he wasn't overdoing it. I was afraid he might. He just looked sort of vacant. You didn't need to make a production of it, because simple-minded people were no rarity in that part of the world.

One of the three Germans working on a vehicle by the side of the road looked at us as we went by. I gave him a greeting —cheery and servile, which was the Italian way with us and

presumably with the Germans too. He didn't acknowledge the greeting. Just turned back to his work.

We had passed the first test. The visual one. Would we make out so well on the other—the oral—if some damn fool Jerry picked us to try his Italian out on or, worse still, if they got suspicious and we were stopped and questioned?

Some of the Germans in among the trees were eating, others cleaning weapons, working around their tents and at their vehicles, others just lounging about. It was an odd sensation to be right there among the enemy. But no-one appeared to give us a second thought. We were part of the local scenery as far as they were concerned.

"We're doing fine," George whispered to me.

"Yeah, so far."

Up ahead, just before the intersection, were Germans in positions closer to the road. They were obviously on sentry duty. Rifles slung over their shoulders. Stick grenades in their belts. Clearly it was their most advanced point. Beyond that—no man's land.

"This is it," said George.

We saw a cluster of Italians walk past the sentries, to take the right fork and start up the hill. They went by unhindered. A good sign. But could we do it too? I had to force my legs to go one after the other. They just didn't seem to want to respond normally. My mouth was dry with the harsh stench of the garlic.

The sentries did look at us as we got up to them. Not just casual glances like the Germans farther back. But, thank God, they didn't seem to think anything was amiss.

We walked on past them, got to the turn-off and headed up the hill. I'd never felt so relieved in my life.

"*Halt!*"

The shout came just after a flurry of activity we could hear behind us at the intersection.

"Keep walking," said George. "It's not necessarily us."

"*Halt!*" It was louder this time.

"What do we do?" I asked George.

"We bloody-well halt."

When we turned around there were two Germans coming at us, rifles at the ready. As soon as they got to us I let loose with some Italian—"What's this all about? We live here. We're going home..." But it made no impression. They just flicked their rifles towards where they'd come from and we had no choice but to be marched down the hill.

We were taken to headquarters and the young officer who was their Italian expert went to work on us. I answered his questions promptly. I had worked out our cover story. My brother and I didn't belong to the town on the hill. We had moved there just recently. I said this in case they took it into their heads to query other Italians about us. When he turned to George I gave him the appropriate Italian gesture for soft in the head, so he didn't bother with George.

My Italian was good. All of us French-Canadians took to it readily. I had not only the lingo but the correct hand-waving and shoulder-shrugging, which was important. The officer seemed satisfied, and from what he said in German to his superior it appeared he was giving us a clean bill of health.

At this juncture I think they would have let us go free—if the senior officer hadn't suddenly decided to get smart.

It puzzled me why, in fact, they had stopped us. It couldn't have been that someone from the house had tipped them off, otherwise they would have spoken to us in English and come straight to the point. They seemed to have thought that we *were* Italian but that for some reason we looked suspicious.

Now the CO had come up to me. Close, standing right in front of me. He got the younger officer to say to me in Italian, "Open your mouth. Wide."

The CO peered into my mouth and then announced, in precise English, "You are no more Italian than I am."

He said something to the others in German, doubtless to the effect that: "You don't see dental work like that on an Italian peasant." Of course you didn't. Among other things, a Montreal dental shark had charged me a hundred dollars for that gold bridge of mine.

At once they searched us and found the Luger on George. It was no good now going on with the Italian bit. We'd had it.

As the questions came pouring at us, George abandoned his moron act and took over.

"We don't have to tell you anything more than name, rank and number," he said. "That's all a prisoner of war is bound to say."

"Oh?" said the senior officer. "And what makes you think you're prisoners of war. You're spies."

"We're officers of the Canadian Army. We were trying to return to our unit. We're not spies."

"Since when have officers of the Canadian Army adopted dirty shirts and corduroy trousers as their uniform?"

George turned to me. "Don't tell them a damn thing."

They persisted in their questioning. But beyond reiterating his name, rank and number, George would say nothing. When I had to admit I was a war correspondent, as explanation of why I didn't have a rank and number, George told them to stop asking me any more questions—though a correspondent, I was entitled to the same privileges as an army officer when taken prisoner.

At length they did stop, but not through deference to George. The plain fact was that the interrogation of prisoners and suspected spies was not the function of an advance unit. It was a job for professionals.

We were loaded into a small truck, with an officer and two guards, and despatched up the road leading out of the valley. But it was a longer trip than we anticipated. It was not merely to division headquarters. It was a trip of something like an hour—in the dark now—to a fair-sized town, the name of which we had no way of knowing.

But when we were bundled out of the truck and escorted into a small office block we knew from the sign at the entrance what the building was. The local Gestapo headquarters.

A bolt of fear shot through me. I cursed George. If only he had agreed with me that we should have given ourselves up, in uniform. Then there would have been no complications. We would have been interrogated by the military and eventually shipped to some P-O-W camp in Germany, there to see out the rest of the war.

Instead, by being caught in civilian clothes, we had moved over from the strictly military to the purlieus of the Gestapo. And God alone knew what we had let ourselves in for.

We had planted in the Germans' minds that we were spies and they were only too willing to proceed from that premise. Now the simple truth would become an elaborate lie. To say we had strayed on to a German-held road, had got trapped between two parts of a convoy, had abandoned our jeep and taken to the hills . . . it would all sound like a well-thought-out cover story.

First thing they did was split us up. Together we could keep our story under control, make sure it tallied. Apart, they could play one of us off against the other. A logical technique. We used it ourselves.

In the room I was taken to were an officer and a soldier in uniforms of dark grey, almost black, not the lighter grey of the German fighting troops. With me was a Gestapo guard, his rifle trained on me. The bleak room, with strictly utility

furniture, was lit by a single bulb suspended from the ceiling, the most depressing lighting effect ever evolved.

The man at the desk was middle-aged, dark, weedy and bespectacled. He had a smile, which I knew was meaningless. He was ingratiating. But of course he was ingratiating—part of the technique to start that way. A prisoner, through fear, could be co-operative right from the word go.

The soldier at the trestle table took notes as the questions began. I claimed to be a war correspondent—what paper? At what part of the Allied front was I stationed prior to my capture? Which theatres of war had I been serving in before?

I answered the questions such as these. Quite harmless. But soon, I knew, the questions wouldn't be so superficial; standing there, in the uncompromising light from the bulb above my head, I had a strange feeling of unreality.

I had written about Gestapo methods of interrogation, about the types of torture they used—material I had got from our Intelligence officers and, more vividly, from interviewing victims lucky enough to survive. But those stories had been purely objective. I had been emotionally detached, the way any newspaperman is when he writes about people who've been in a serious accident or disaster.

But I could bring no such detachment to the situation I was in now. It was *I* who was being interrogated by the Gestapo. And it was frightening.

They kept at me for several hours. Other officers came and went, discussing things in German with the man at the desk, asking their own questions of me. And all the time I had to remain standing.

The questions were all of the same type—about individuals and organisations in the Allied set-up of which I honestly knew nothing. They were convinced I was a spy and that the war correspondent bit was just my cover story. I told them that was nonsense. I kept saying over and over again that I had nothing to do with spying.

When they stopped, for the time being at any rate, I felt Kurtner (that was what they called the man at the desk) was becoming resigned to the fact that I was telling the truth. Though I couldn't be sure, because he gave away nothing.

They took me up to the next floor, along a narrow corridor to a tiny room that was one of a series of compartments formed by bricking up sections of a big room. It was barely wider than the door to it. There was a mattress on the floor and a bucket with the handle taken off. The handle would

have made a useful weapon. There was no window, only a rectangular hole high up on the wall opposite the door, not big enough to get through. There was a slit in the door so that the guards could see in.

They had taken away my belt. Part of the psychological pressure brought to bear on me. When a man is talking to another and one of them has to hold his pants up, who is the dominant one?

Where was George, I wondered, as they shoved me into the cell. I had seen nothing of anyone else around there. The door was locked behind me and I sank down on to the stinking mattress, aching and exhausted.

Next morning in that airless cell I could make out things scratched on the walls. Obscene comments—in English and Italian—about the Germans. Initials and dates. A RAF officer's name and rank. A row of scratches like a picket fence, where someone had marked the days before . . . before he had been taken out and shot?

They gave me some ersatz bread and soup that tasted of washing-up and I was taken back to the interrogation room again.

Now the questions were on a quite different tack. Now they were purely military, and in this regard I was vulnerable. I had welcomed their espionage questions because I could tell them I didn't have the answers without the necessity of lying. But now that they had accepted the fact that I was, in truth, a war correspondent, I was in deep trouble.

A war correspondent knows much more about what's going on than any officer, apart from those high up in the military staff. Correspondents are thoroughly briefed not only on specific battles in progress and projected, but also on the broader aspects of the conduct of the war. They are given a good deal of off-the-record information, the army reasoning that it is better to have them properly informed than to keep them in the dark and risk their indulging in conjecture that could be embarrassingly accurate.

And now Kurtner went after that storehouse of information that I had. Were the Allies mounting a fresh attack on Cassino? When was it going to be? Did they plan a sea-borne landing somewhere along the coast above Cassino?

I had to start lying in earnest. I said I didn't know.

"How can you not know?" Kurtner asked. "You're a war correspondent. It's your business to know these things."

"I've been away from Italy. Just got back. I was in Greece doing stories on the civil strife."

This could have been true. Some of my British colleagues had gone to Athens to cover the troubles there. But Kurtner was no fool. He knew damn well there were no Canadians in Greece and that my main interest would be our troops in Italy.

He asked, "Are the Canadians being moved over from the Adriatic to the Cassino front for the new attack?"

How could I lie my way out of that one? Of course they were. Some units, such as the Calgary tanks, were already at Cassino preparing for the operation.

"I don't know," I said.

"That's a lie."

They got tough with me. The kid gloves were off. They grilled me right through the morning. They had lunch. There was none for me, but they did let me have some water when I asked for it.

Then the rough stuff started. But it was no worse than I'd seen dished out by the Montreal police when I was on the crime beat. I was puzzled why they weren't going further than that. I was to learn why later.

They kept stressing that there was urgency. They said they knew things were going to happen at Cassino very shortly. They wanted to know when. I gave them no satisfaction.

I could stand up to what they were doing to me. But *for how long*—and if it got worse? *You don't know*, that's the damnable part of it. I wondered what was happening to George, or anyone else in the building. People I'd interviewed who had been in Gestapo hands had told me of screams. I didn't hear any.

They were getting nothing out of me, but then—just before four by the clock on the shelf—they marched me downstairs to the courtyard at the back. I had been feeling that I could get through the other, but now I was terrified.

"What are you going to do?" I asked desperately.

Kurtner just looked at me. I could see a detachment of five soldiers, with rifles, among the men standing around in the courtyard.

"You're not going to shoot me!" It didn't make sense.

Nobody would say anything to me. They turned towards another door at the back of the building and I saw George being brought out by the guards.

I was shocked at the way he looked. There were ugly red

welts on his face. His left eye was all puffed up, almost closed. He had an agonised look. He was in pain around the stomach, his hand pressed in tight there.

As they marched him past he caught sight of me. "Don't tell the bastards anything!" He tried to shout it, blood coming from his mouth.

And I realised how they had summed the situation up. They knew they weren't going to get anything out of George for two reasons. In the first place, as a junior officer he didn't know a great deal. And secondly, they had sensed that he was the type who wouldn't crack, no matter how far they went with him. Therefore he was expendable. They would use him to see if they could make me talk.

They took him to the wall at the far end. The five soldiers were lined up facing him, about ten paces from him. He said something which I couldn't hear entirely, only some of the profanity.

There was defiance still on George's face as he looked squarely at the firing-squad.

I couldn't stand it. "Stop them," I said to Kurtner. "I'll talk."

Kurtner called to the officer in charge of the soldiers and they were ordered to lower their rifles.

George, all tensed up for the moment when the bullets would come shattering at him, collapsed now. Someone went to him, lying huddled on the ground.

Kurtner said to me: "You're really going to tell us everything we want to know?"

"Yes," I nodded. "Yes."

He signalled to the officer and the soldiers were ordered to come to attention. I saw George push aside the man who had gone to him and get to his feet of his own accord. I don't think he had been able to hear what I had said. He didn't seem to know quite what was happening...

In Kurtner's room I told about the Allied plans for the new attack on Cassino, with his clerk at the trestle table taking it all down. But when Kurtner asked me about any diversion the Allies would launch in conjunction with the Cassino push, I called a halt. I was giving them all that stuff—but were they playing fair with me?

"Is he all right?" I asked Kurtner.

"Your friend? You have nothing to worry about."

"How can I be sure? I want to see him."

"In a little while. There's more we want from you now."

"I'm not going to tell you any more until I know that George is safe. I want you to prove he's all right."

"You have my assurance no harm will come to him. Now tell me, what sort of diversion is planned for the Cassino attack?"

From the way he said it, I knew he wasn't going to let me see George until I'd replied. I told him about our plan for a seaborne landing at Anzio, up the coast north of Cassino. And not until he had got out of me everything I knew about that did he send his clerk off to transcribe his notes and then he picked up the phone.

When he had made his phone call I was all keyed up as I waited for George's arrival. I had gone through hell spilling out those things about Cassino and Anzio. It's after an ordeal like that you need someone to talk to.

But when George was brought in, Kurtner showed no sign of going out and leaving us alone. Fair enough, I suppose. We couldn't very well be left unguarded.

"*How are you, George?*" I said warmly. "*They've laid off you? They're not doing anything to you, are they?*"

But there was no such warmth from George. He just stood off from me, looking at me.

"What have you told them?" he asked.

"It doesn't matter about that," I said.

"It *does* matter about that. *You've talked, haven't you?*"

"You're safe and sound, George. That's the main thing."

"It isn't the main thing. You're a goddam traitor."

He sort of spat the words at me. I was shaken by it. There was real hatred in his voice.

"I saved your life, George."

"You didn't. You were thinking of yourself. You thought they were going to shoot both of us and if you talked you could save your skin."

"I was thinking of you, George! They were going to shoot you. I stopped them. I saved your life."

"I didn't want you to save my life, not on these terms."

"I couldn't stand by and let them shoot you."

"I was prepared to die. That's what you've got to be prepared for when you're in the army and you're in a war."

"George, you sound like a bloody boy scout."

His mouth dropped open, as though he couldn't comprehend how I could say such a thing. Then he swore at me, a blistering string of epithets.

"You've turned traitor," he said at length, "and you've dragged me down with you."

"I can't understand this. I thought you'd be grateful."

"Grateful!" He looked at me aghast. "You're all mixed up. You say you saved my life. But now I'm tarred with the same brush as you. Okay, I'm still alive instead of being bumped off. But if we get out of this mess, what do I say when they ask me how I managed to survive? I say, 'The Gestapo were very nice to us. They asked us some questions but we didn't talk. That's okay, said the Gestapo boys, you don't have to talk unless you want to.' You disgust me!"

George turned to Kurtner, his face immobile but enjoying every moment of it, you could tell.

"Get me out of here," George said to him. "I don't want to be anywhere near this bastard."

I went through some terrible soul-searching in the following days.

Had I really done it for George's sake? Or, as he had said, was it to save my own skin? I couldn't see that they would have shot me. I was too valuable to them. But, dammit, they knew I would crack. George would never talk. I was the weak one and they knew it.

And what about our men at Cassino and Anzio, after what I had told Kurtner? It didn't bear thinking about.

I pleaded with Kurtner to let me see George again. I liked George immensely. I admired him, no doubt for qualities he had which I didn't possess. I felt I just had to square myself with him. Surely he would bring understanding to the thing. But no amount of pleading with Kurtner or other officers would do any good. And then something happened which took the matter out of Gestapo hands.

It happened very suddenly in the middle of the night. I heard a commotion downstairs. The guard on our floor went down to investigate. The rumpus went on for some time. There were shouts. People scuffling around and running up and down the stairs. The sound of trucks and other vehicles being revved up and coming and going.

Then, as abruptly as it had all started, there was silence. The whole building became as silent as if it was now empty of the Gestapo. Which, of course, it was.

They had got out in one hell of a hurry, which was the usual thing when the Gestapo moved out of any area. More than anybody else, the Gestapo never wanted to be captured.

When it dawned on us what had happened, the banging on the cell doors and the shouting began. At length people from the town came to us. Tentatively at first, for they regarded the building with loathing and fear and they wanted to be sure the Gestapo had really gone before entering. Then, with crowbars and pickaxes, they got our doors open and we were free.

As I went downstairs I saw that they were using the pickaxes for wrecking the place now. This, like the Gestapo getting out fast, was the usual thing with a building they had occupied. The Italians didn't want any part of it once it had been sullied by the Gestapo.

Some of the Italians had got hold of jerricans of petrol and I saw them dousing Kurtner's room and the other interrogation rooms. Then, when they were sure everybody was out of the building, they set it alight.

It was well ablaze when at last I located George in the street among the crowd distributing wine and food to those of us who had been locked up. I extended my hand to him—the sort of nervous, perhaps silly, gesture one would make in such a situation. He ignored it. He just looked at me.

What was going through his mind I didn't know. No matter how well you know a man, you can never look right into his soul. George had been sweating it out, thinking about it—what else had there been to do in that building?

I tried to put myself in his place. In his circumstances, what would my reaction have been? How would *you* have reacted? You are on the point of being shot. Someone comes forward and saves your life. But to do so, he has to do something which to you is quite beyond the pale—co-operate with the enemy. But you're alive and you owe your life to this man. When you both get your freedom, do you denounce him as a traitor or do you say nothing about it, knowing that nothing is likely to come out about his treachery? Which would *you* have done?

But I wasn't able to talk to George and reason with him, not then, because there was a diversion.

The typically emotional Italians, so hasty to set the building on fire, hadn't given a thought to the possible spread of the blaze. Now it looked like engulfing neighbouring buildings and they set about getting their antiquated fire-fighting equipment into action.

But George's concern was with some German vehicles in the driveway at one side of the burning building. If we were

going to get out of there we needed some sort of vehicle.

He dashed over to the driveway. First one he tried, there was obviously no ignition key because he couldn't budge it. As he got out to go to another, a Volkswagen, flames were shooting from the windows immediately above him. The Italians, looking on, shouted "*Mamma mia!*" He got into the Volkswagen and we heard it start up. He belted out of the driveway, the crowd parting to let him get across the road and into a side-alley, well away from the blaze.

When I got over to him I saw that the car was well stocked with spare petrol and rations, among other things. Clearly it had been all ready to go, but those in it had switched to other transport at the last minute.

But no sooner had I joined George than cheering broke out among the people in the street and we heard the sound of scout-cars, jeeps and motorbikes as they roared into the town—a spearhead force of Americans, the reason the Gestapo had been in such haste to leave.

Some of them stopped and others of them were ordered on to continue the chase.

We went up to a jeep where a captain had started interrogating the locals. George told him who he was, with the captain looking doubtfully at George's clothes until he learned that we had been in Gestapo custody.

"Gestapo, eh?" said the captain, looking over at the fire. "That's all there was here, in the way of Germans? Nothing important from an army point of view?"

"I guess not," said George. "I don't really know."

"That's what we understand, anyway. That's why we're breezing on through."

"What's the situation?"

"We seem to have them on the run, now that Cassino's cracked."

"Cassino has fallen?"

"You didn't know?"

"They didn't tell us a damn thing in there. How was it at Cassino?"

"It took some doing. A goddam bloodbath. But we broke their line and now they're falling back."

Cassino a bloodbath. I saw the reaction on George's face to that and I knew what his next question would be.

"What about the Anzio show?"

"That was a first class muck-up. We don't know yet what went wrong there. Look, my friend, I'm sorry but we've got

to push on. Anything we can do for you? Have you got food and stuff?"

"We're okay, we've got food and transport. But can you tell me one more thing? Where are the Canadians right now?"

"Their main force is going hell for leather up the Adriatic coast. Corps headquarters should be established at Ancona by now."

The captain held out his map and switched on his flashlight. "Over here, see," he said to George, pointing. "About sixty miles, across by this road."

We watched the Americans go and then, as we walked to the Volkswagen, I knew that George had got something sorted out in his mind.

But he didn't say anything until we got to the car. Then he looked at me directly and said, "You're under arrest."

"What the hell are you talking about!"

"We're going to Corps HQ in Ancona and in the meantime you're under open arrest."

"You're going to turn me in?"

"I am."

"Now, wait a minute, George. We haven't had a chance to talk properly about this."

"There's nothing to talk about."

"You know what will happen to me if you turn me in."

"It's my duty as an officer of the Canadian Army."

"Despite the fact that I saved your life?"

"That's got nothing to do with it."

"George, you can't do this to me!"

"I have no option."

I looked at him there in the alleyway. I knew it was no good. Nothing I could say would change his mind. I had a shattered feeling as I realised that suddenly it had all come to a head. This was it. If he was determined that he must hand me over, nothing would deflect him from it. And if he handed me over, that was the end of me.

He didn't know I had a gun, which I'd found as I was coming out of the building.

I took it out now.

"Put that away," George said. "You won't use it."

"Won't I?"

"You won't kill me. You haven't got the guts."

"I haven't?"

"You're weak. You're weak right through. That's why

you became a war correspondent instead of being in the army. You figured it was much safer that way."

That stung me, because it was true.

George went on, not worried in the least about the gun pointed at him. "You never went near the front unless you couldn't find any way of getting out of it. You've written all your stories from talking to casualties at the hospitals and men who've just come out of the line, so you wouldn't have to go up there for yourself. You're a coward."

"You'd better shut up, George."

"And when the chips are down and we're being questioned, you crack up. You say you did it for my sake. But it was for yourself. You became a traitor to save your own bloody neck."

"Don't, for God's sake, George, don't!"

"Don't what? Don't give you any more home truths?"

"Shut up, George, or I'll kill you!"

"You won't. The guy who's going to do something, goes ahead and does it. He doesn't just talk about it."

I pulled the trigger.

George wasn't so bright after all. If he'd played it smart he would never have put me under arrest. He would have said nothing, driven us over to Ancona and then turned me in without any warning.

I remember thinking that at the time, and also about his taunting me. If he hadn't said all that stuff about me being weak and a coward, I don't think I'd have got worked up to the point where I used the gun.

But later when I was thinking more about it, when I was at the wheel of the Volkswagen—not heading for Ancona but making my way up the west coast towards France—when I was thinking about it then, I wondered.

Perhaps George had a purpose in doing that thing about putting me under arrest and then goading me when I produced the gun. Perhaps he had his reasons . . .

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◆ **New Zealand born, Wallace Reyburn has been writing and travelling for most of his life. Now living in London—which he claims to be the most civilised city in the world—he spends all his time writing novels and short stories, working out his plots while watching cricket at Lord's.**

SNAKE JUICE

At this point, I was not quite certain about my state of diplomatic immunity

Victor H. Perera

IN bone-dry Bombay, which many consider the last outpost of prohibition, liquor cannot be purchased legally except by foreigners, and paradoxically by alcoholics with medical certificates. Black market prices for a bottle of whisky run as high as a hundred rupees, which means that unless you're a tourist, a rupee millionaire, or a confirmed teetotaller, you will sooner or later be forced to rely on one of several thousand local bootleggers for your supply of "snake juice"—as domestic brews are known here.

A cousin of my wife's, who can claim none of these exemptions, was describing his hardships to me one evening last summer as we strolled along the embankment at Warli—a small, rocky beach beyond Bombay's Marine Street. Although it was monsoon season, there had been no rain for several days, and the air was clear and comfortably light. The tide was out, and we could see the shadows of crab-fishermen as they scrambled from rock to rock, poking their torches into likely crevasses.

Beyond them, in the least accessible corner of the beach, a colony of moonshiners had set up a still. We could make out some of them by the flicker of kerosene lamps, sedulously brewing vatfuls of some crude distillate that may ultimately taste like kerosene, although its market value will be considerably higher.

"That really is vile stuff, no doubt about it," cousin Gopi said, ruefully. "But it certainly beats going dry . . . especially on some days." Gopi is a senior officer in the Indian Navy,

now more or less permanently on land duty. During his twenties he sailed around the world for two years with the Merchant Marine and is still regarded as something of a maverick by conservative members of the family.

I made him promise right then and there to take me to a real speakeasy, and the opportunity came sooner than I could have hoped—the following evening, in fact, after a bleak musical soirée where the only refreshment served had been fruit cocktail, liberally spiked with cloves. We dropped our wives home well before midnight and hailed a taxi. The driver took one look at Gopi and me and winked knowingly, "Girlie girlie tonight, chief?"

"Hooch," Gopi said. "And make it quick. We can't last much longer."

"Okay, chief," he yelled, and we were off like a paddy wagon, skidding around corners, rattling pell-mell through crowded bazaars, up and down dark alleyways, and then bumpety-bump along a deserted country road until we came to a small fishing encampment by the sea, identical to the one at Warli.

"Yes, this is the place," Gopi said, stepping out and sniffing the air while I paid the grinning taxi driver. "The chappie must have remembered my face. I used to come more often when I was single."

We walked to the nearest hut, and Gopi called out, "Krishna—O—Krishnaaa," in a low but carrying voice. Krishna, Gopi explained, was the code name of the headman.

"Coming, man, coming," a distant voice replied, and was joined moments after by its owner—a stout, wheezing, elderly man with a white *lungi* around his middle. He lifted a kerosene lamp in Gopi's face. "Welcome, sahib!" he smiled, on recognising a former customer. He ushered us into his tiny shack, apologising beforehand for its lack of "gentlemanly comforts," and bade us sit on two empty kerosene drums. After reproaching Gopi good-humouredly for having kept away so long, he asked if we would prefer our "Mozambique juice" with soda or ice.

"With ice, please," I said, and sneaked an apprehensive glance over my shoulder. Krishna apparently interpreted this as a veiled qualm about the quality of his liquor.

"Don't worry, sahib. I have the choicest mosambi juice always tucked away in a safe place for Gopal sahib and his friends. His friends are my friends." He promptly produced two tall glasses with false bottoms from a hidden

drawer and placed them on the table. "And as for the authorities," he added, almost as an afterthought, "please be assured that we have the best of understandings with them. In fact, we are expecting a visit from them tonight."

Gopi gave no indication of alarm at this announcement, but I did, and would probably have bolted for the door had not Krishna's wife shuffled in just then with a bowl of ice and two freshly baked pomfrets.

"Ah, here comes the real speciality of the house," Gopi exclaimed, smacking his lips with pleasure as Mrs. Krishna set the steaming fish before us. She was a lean, wiry woman, inches taller than her husband, and wore her saffron sari tucked up between her legs—fisher style.

Krishna, meantime, had been scuttling about under some burlap covers and popped up suddenly with two quart bottles of amber liquid. "This comes from my special mosambi cellar," he said, proudly, "for two very special guests."

The curried pomfret was delicious, which could hardly be said for the liquor—it smelled faintly of anæsthetic and had a raw, rotgut taste—but at least the supply was plentiful. We had finished half of the first bottle and all of the fish when a scruffy face peered in at the door.

"They have come," it said hoarsely, and vanished.

Krishna excused himself and started for the door, but I grabbed his arm. "You mustn't tell them we're here," I whispered. "I'm sure they'll arrest us." I had never bothered to pick up my foreigner's liquor permit, and wasn't at all certain about diplomatic immunity.

"Calm yourself, sahib, please," Krishna said, placing a clammy hand on my shoulder. "This will be only a momentary inconvenience."

"Sit down, Vic," Gopi called, cheerfully. "It isn't you they're after." He was chuckling, and sipping unconcernedly from his glass.

"If you want to see for yourself, sahib, I will be most happy to show you," Krishna added.

Before any of us could make a move, the door was pushed open and a police inspector walked in. He looked us over slowly and snapped his heels in salute. "Carry on, please. I regret I cannot join you. As you see, I am on an official raid." He bowed his head, unsmiling, and turned to Krishna. "Well, old man, have you made all the preparations?" Krishna nodded. "Very well, then, I shall be waiting outside."

The execution of the raid turned out to be, as the old bootlegger promised, a fairly routine affair. After sending his wife into the kitchen for more fish, and hitching up his sagging loincloth, Krishna met the inspector and two of his constables outside the shack.

At a signal from them he cupped his hands to his mouth and cried, "Nathoo-oo Nathoo-oo . . . The inspector sahib is here . . . Hur-ryyyy." He repeated the call several times until a half-naked young man came trotting up with a large kerosene drum in each hand.

"You mustn't keep the inspector sahib waiting," Krishna admonished Nathoo, and relieved him of the two tins. He unscrewed their caps and peered inside. "I hope you have ten gallons in both of these?"

"Yes, Krishna," Nathoo replied, with a good-natured grin. "I weighed them on the scales this morning."

"That's a good fellow. Now go and put these in the inspector sahib's jeep and wait for him there."

"Yes, Krishna." Nathoo salaamed, and trotted off docilely with his load.

"Nathoo is my younger brother's second son," Krishna explained to the inspector, as we accompanied them to the jeep. "He's a strong, hard-working boy, and very obedient, but not so quick to understand as his brothers . . . The truth is, he's a little dull. Not very bright." He shrugged. "What can be done? His horoscope was inauspicious from birth. He is a Taurus, you see, sahib, and was conceived during the dark phase of the moon. To make things worse, the tide was at its lowest ebb in five years, the poor fellow."

"We'll take good care of him," the inspector said, snapping a rattan stick against his side.

The jeep was parked outside the village boundary, its searchlight beam pointed straight into the sea. One of the constables made a perfunctory check of the kerosene drums, placed them in the rear seat, and ordered Nathoo to climb in beside them.

"It's a pity you won't stop to have a small glass with us," Krishna said, hovering close behind the inspector's elbow. "This week I have prepared a batch of specially matured mosambi that is just the way you like it."

"Some other time," the inspector said, disengaging his arm from Krishna's grasp. "At one o'clock I have to be at Dharbagi Creek, ten miles from here, to arrest Bhola, and I have

another appointment or two. I mustn't keep them waiting." He stepped briskly aboard the jeep, nearly dragging the old bootlegger in with him.

"Nathoo, you must remember always to do just as the inspector sahib tells you," Krishna said to his nephew.

"Yes, Krishna."

"You mustn't protest about the prison food like you did last time and feed it to the bandicoots and the cockroaches. Will you remember that, Nathoo?"

"I'll remember, Krishna."

"That's a good fellow," Krishna said, patting him on the knee and clinging with all his bulk to the side of the jeep until, with a tinkling of anklets and a long, graceful stride, Mrs. Krishna appeared on the scene, balancing a stack of pomfrets and a single banana leaf on top of her head.

"Ah, just in time," Krishna smiled at the inspector, urging her on behind his back. "She has brought a little something for you sahibs, since you won't stop with us this evening."

With lightning fingers Mrs. K. wrapped the fish into four separate bundles, and her husband distributed them among the officers. He was careful, however, to save the fattest packet for the inspector, as befitted his rank.

"Please forgive my wife's delay in grinding the coconut chutney," he said, bowing and scraping the ground.

"I cooked them with fine red chillis, just as the inspector's memsahib likes it," chimed in Mrs. K., but the old man signalled her to keep silent.

The inspector opened his parcel at one end, sniffed it, and nodded his head in approval. "That's fine, Krishna."

"I know the memsahib is a good cook, and very fond of this preparation, but she does not cook fish at home... After all," Krishna added delicately, "she is a Brahmin."

"That is true, old man," the inspector said. "I'm quite sure she will be pleased." He motioned the driver to start the engine, but Krishna hadn't finished with him yet.

"Actually, sahib," he spoke into the inspector's ear, in a clearly audible whisper, "when the inspector sahib brings the fish home, it puts the memsahib's mind at ease that he has really been out on his raids and is not sitting in the police station playing cards and drinking hooch... Isn't it, sahib?"

The inspector laughed out loud this time—as we all did—and waved his rattan switch cheerfully behind him as the jeep backed up sharply, lurched, and wobbled out of sight.

The happy outcome of the raid restored our high spirits, and we returned to the shack to polish off the second bottle and have another of Mrs. K.'s delectable pomfrets. On the way, Krishna cleared up for my benefit the mystery of Nathoo.

"You see, sahib, this month it is Nathoo's time to get arrested. We all take it by turns, one each month. And, since we are all related by blood as well as profession, the wife and children of the convict are looked after by the rest of us until he is out of jail."

"And what of the inspector?"

"Of course, with the inspector, as you have seen, we have reached a very mutual and satisfactory understanding. He is flesh and blood, after all, and is fond of having a glass of mosambi now and then, along with the usual bribe. The memsahib, his wife, has a weakness for the fish curry which our women know how to prepare in a very special way."

He stopped at the entrance to the shack and pondered a moment, stroking the grey stubble on his chin. "Of course, even one month in jail is not exactly a holiday, and it means the loss of a pair of hands at the still... Perhaps even this difficulty can be smoothed out to a mutual satisfaction if we really apply our minds to it."

A toothless, disreputable grin transfigured his face. "Of course, the inspector sahib will be due for a promotion by and by, and when he becomes superintendent—" he shrugged—"then this problem will just cease to exist."

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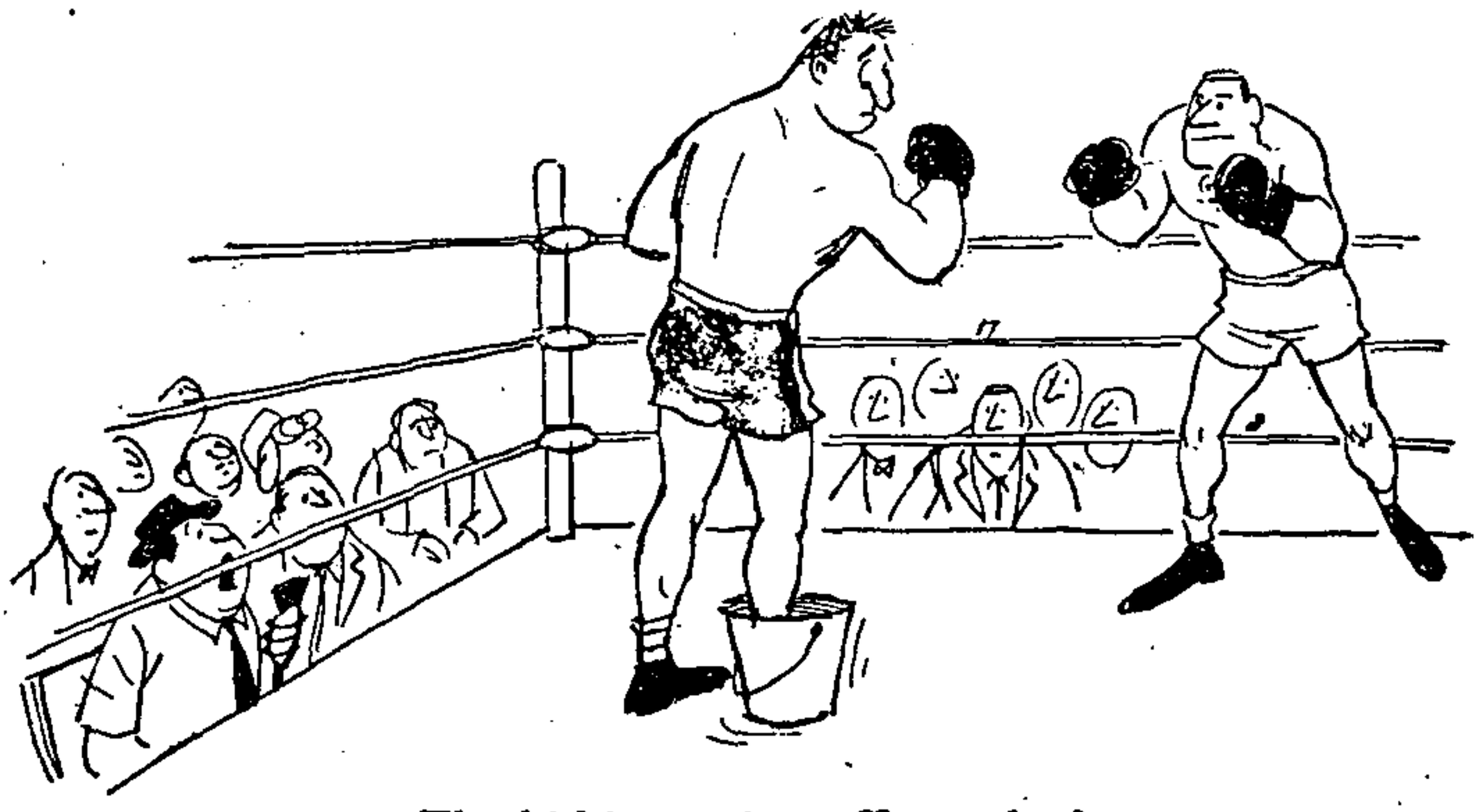

"The kid is getting off to a bad start this round . . ."

SEVEN DEADLY VIRTUES

Well, my boy, we are going to have a little talk

by STANLEY ELLIN

AS a mere stripling, Charles realised that he had been happily endowed with good breeding, keen intelligence, and overwhelming ambition. In fact, so heated and furious was this ambition that it had been a matter of grave concern to his father before the lad was out of short trousers. But such concern did not move Charles. His father was a good man, a kindly and humble clergyman who had spent a lifetime of genteel poverty at his vocation, but who was hardly a fit model for an enterprising son. For himself Charles had chosen a far more worthy model—none other than that renowned magnate, P.O.D. Evergreen, Founder and President of Evergreen Enterprises.

Although late in the field, Evergreen Enterprises had swiftly become the most titanic of titanic corporations. It produced and sold every conceivable product from which profit could be extracted. It levelled forests, drilled oil-wells, bored mines, erected factories, swept the land, sea, and air with its carriers, and filled every avenue of public communication with its advertising. Banks kept its securities in the same portfolios as government bonds. Sprightly widows bought its shares with confidence that their declining years would be happy ones. Elder statesmen in Wall Street tipped their hats when they pronounced its name. To hold rank even as a Junior Executive in its councils was a distinction. And the future for an ambitious young man holding that distinction was a glowing one.

For these reasons, immediately after he graduated *summa cum laude* from the School of Commerce of New England University, Charles went to the New York office of Evergreen Enterprises, Inc., and applied for a position.

He was placed in the hands of the Personnel Department, interviewed at length, confronted with batteries of tests, and reinterviewed. He was also informed that this process was only a method of appraising whether or not he would be allowed to face a final and fateful interview with P.O.D. Evergreen himself. So assiduous was this paragon among executives in seeking the right man for the right job that every deserving applicant for a place in his company's managerial staff had to be judged by him personally.

At last came the day when Charles was led into the office where behind a magnificent desk sat his idol, master of the greatest industrial empire on earth, boon companion to presidents and kings—yet, withal, a simple, unprepossessing figure, almost fatherly in the way he dismissed his secretary and waved Charles to a seat.

He said, "Well, my boy, we are going to have a little talk, and I think you will find it a strange one. In fact, I think you will find it shocking in some ways. That is because we are going to talk without using any of the cant, any of the mealy-mouthed and sugar-coated language on which you have, no doubt, been raised. Don't misunderstand me. I have no objection to fine moralistic and sociological jargon as it is used outside the confines of this office. In fact, I publicly indulge in it myself with the consolation that it's good business to deliver what the customer wants. But within these four walls I will have no part of it. Do you understand that?"

Charles assured him that he did.

"Excellent. Now tell me in plain, unvarnished words why you wish to work for this company."

Charles was prepared for that one. He said, "I am looking for the biggest and best market for my talents. There I can perform a worthwhile service which—"

The look in the President's eye stopped him short. P.O.D. Evergreen waited for a moment and then said gently, "My boy, you are being glib. I have not asked you to prepare a tract for the conversion of the benighted heathen—that is not our business here. Or are you under the impression that it is?"

Charles hung his head.

"Come, come," said P.O.D. Evergreen, "there is no need to look so downcast. You have started off badly, true, but so has every other applicant I ever interviewed. It is necessary to draw up this sanctimonious bilge before we can reach the crystal waters beneath it. And even then I find that some

applicants persist in defining their motives in such terms as *security* and *status*. This would be fatal to your prospects, my boy. I want you to use the honest equivalents—*money* and *power*—in discussing this matter. Because, in a nutshell, these are your motives, aren't they?"

"I'm not sure," Charles said, somewhat shaken. "I don't believe I've ever thought of it like that."

"Of course you have. You've simply been allowed to conceal the awareness of it from yourself by the vocabulary you've been instructed in. You want *security*, my boy, in terms of wealth that you can spend freely, and you want *status* based on a position of power. The greater the power you wield, the loftier the status. And I heartily approve of that—just as I approve of your coming to Evergreen Enterprises where such ambitions can best be gratified. Evergreen Enterprises is, as you put it yourself, the biggest and the best. Do you have any idea why?"

"Well, for one thing, the many products—"

"No, no, don't go off on that track. We supply nothing to the consumer that many another company does not supply as conveniently. And sometimes even more cheaply."

Charles desperately grasped at a straw. "Efficiency, then? It is widely believed that Evergreen Enterprises operates at a level of efficiency unknown to any of its competitors."

"Right you are, my boy, and there's your answer. From the lowliest Junior Executive up to the Chairman of the Board, efficiency is the credo here. And the way we obtain it is the secret of our success. That secret enables us to find the most talented managerial team in the world, to hold that team together year in and year out with absolutely no turnover—an incredible feat in itself, you must admit—and to draw maximum effort from it at all times. What do you think of that?"

Charles said with deep feeling, "I have always felt my place was here, sir. I am more certain of it than ever."

"I am glad to hear you say so—it shows the kind of spirit we are looking for. But I wonder if you will feel the same after I fully explain what would be expected of you as a member of this team. In all fairness, my boy, I must warn you that this explanation will put you to your hardest test."

He spoke with a kindliness that touched the youthful applicant. Charles was full of resolve to prove his mettle. He said quietly, "I am ready to meet any test, sir."

"I hope so. And I will get down to cases by saying that

before I founded this organisation I carefully studied the problems of others in this field. One weakness was quickly discernible in all of them: they simply could not get full value from their executives. Every high-salaried man of them had been so saturated by the moralistic nonsense he had been reared on that he could not release himself entirely to his job, where, of course, realistic attitudes must prevail.

"There was always a chasm between what he had been taught to be as a youth and what he had to practise on his company's behalf. Inevitably this made him guilt-ridden and subject to neurosis. It was a common condition. Still is, for that matter, but not here. Among the upper echelons of Evergreen Enterprises you will find only men who are well-adjusted, always ready to give their best to the job."

"But how was that achieved, sir?" Charles asked with eager interest.

"Very simply, my boy. Have you ever heard of the seven deadly sins?"

"I have. My father is a minister, and so I am well-informed on this subject."

"That is all in your favour. Can you name them for me?"

"I can," said Charles. "They are pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust."

"Quite right. And have you ever indulged in any of them?" Charles remained speechless.

"Oh, come, come, my boy," said P.O.D. Evergreen jovially. "There is no need to dissemble. I don't regard these alleged sins as sins at all. Why, they are the very foundations on which morale is built here!"

Charles scented a trap. "Are they?" he said warily.

"They are indeed. Now force yourself to think of them, not as sins, but as virtues, and see if you do not immediately feel a great sense of release. Of ease, of assurance, of well-being. Aha, I see from your expression that you do. It's a remarkable feeling, isn't it?"

He was right. But then doubts flooded in on Charles. He said, "I don't see—"

"You will, my boy, you will."

The doubts remained. Charles said, "But let us take pride, for example. If I demonstrated it, wouldn't that stir up resentment against me?"

"Yes, but it would also advertise your worth to those who should know about it and otherwise might not. Imagine that you are working here in a lowly position. You come up with

a good and profitable idea. In another company your immediate superior might steal that idea and claim credit for it. But here you are expected to express your pride in it so loudly that credit goes rightfully to you."

"That is what I mean. This will undoubtedly make my immediate superior and many others bitterly envious of me."

"It will indeed. They will be eaten by naked envy until they come up with an idea to surpass yours. Then it will be your turn again. In this way we all prosper. Civilisation is built on envy. The human race has always profited from it. Let us not disparage it."

Charles pondered this. "But," he said challengingly, "what about anger then? Surely, anger can't be made profitable."

"No? Then imagine your precious idea put into the hands of an underling for commission, and badly botched through his ineptitude or neglect. How are you to protect yourself against a repetition of such a disaster? Through anger, my boy—violent anger. When word gets out that you have a reservoir of anger always in store, you will find your instructions carried out with uncanny efficiency. There's a magic virtue in unrestrained bad temper, believe me."

"Yes, I can see that," Charles admitted. "And I suppose that sloth, too—I can't see the businesslike virtue in sloth."

"Because you are still young and unrealistic. But sloth in its many forms—the surreptitious coffee break, the added time at lunch, the napping at the desk, yes, and a dozen other variants—is the finest possible tool for sharpening the wits. Not to be caught, that is the trick. The executive rôle is not for the drudge; it is for the one who has best developed the immense skill needed to conceal his sloth.

"Show me the man who seems to be drudging away and isn't, and I'll show you a future Chairman of the Board."

Charles was glad to hear this. Despite his feverish ambition he was naturally slothful. That had worried him at times, but he could see that it need worry him no longer.

P.O.D. Evergreen said, "Yes, and the rest of those so-called vices are the soundest of virtues, too, when you view them honestly and intelligently. Avarice I hardly need speak of: it is the driving force behind any man worth his salt. And gluttony and lust have very much come into their own today—speaking, of course, in practical terms.

"The Evergreen Enterprises man who attends conventions or travels on business is the representative of the company in every way. If he can out-eat, out-drink, and out-copulate all

competition, the prestige he earns goes to the company, and with it more business. Of course, we provide him with an obvious advantage. He is expected to engage in these activities without guilt or inhibition. No-one will ever ask him to answer for his expense account or his morals. He is truly a free man.

"You see, my boy, there is nothing mysterious about our success here. Our standards are the usual ones, but instead of feeling guilty when you exercise them, you must see how sane they are, and glory in them. That is all there is to it."

The bright vista of the future swam before Charles' eyes in a golden haze. He said, "How simple and logical it all seems. Yet, how inspired it is. To let a man always be himself, to have him act naturally at all times—"

"Yes, my boy, and to have this be the very means by which he advances himself—well, it was inspired, I'll admit that. But then, such inspirations are my job. If I couldn't come up with them now and then, I would have no right to occupy my position."

His friendly tone filled Charles with assurance. He said boldly, "I envy you that high position, sir. I would like nothing better than a chance to oust you from it and take your place."

P.O.D. Evergreen rose to his feet and thrust out a hand. "And that chance you shall have, my boy. If I had any doubts about your good qualities, they are completely settled by what you have just said." He shook Charles' hand with a powerful grip. "There, that is all the contract we need. I am sure that you have a great deal to offer Evergreen Enterprises; in return, it offers you a limitless future. When do you wish to start?"

"At once," said Charles.

"Good. Then I shall give you final instructions now. For one thing, you will remember that our little talk here was entirely confidential. Our competitors will inevitably discover the solution to their problem, but there is no point in helping them to do it. Moreover, if you were to confide what was said here to the world at large it would be misunderstood, and you would be the sufferer. You understand that, of course."

"I do."

"I am sure you do. Then tomorrow you will start as assistant to the head of a department. You will spend one year at that assignment, and it will be a year of probation, more or less. Everything depends on how you conduct yourself during that period. Then you will report to me and I

will decide whether or not you are qualified to become a full executive." He smiled engagingly at Charles. "As you can see, my boy, I like to pull all the strings myself."

There was a weariness in the way he said it that made Charles feel suddenly humble. It was easy to see why this man commanded the fierce loyalty that he did.

"You can count on me, sir," Charles said. He rose from his chair, not wanting to overstay his leave. "Is there anything else?"

"There is, my boy, but you must learn it for yourself through experience. Good luck in that."

It was one year later to the day when Charles was again summoned to the office of his President. He knew that he had done well during the year. Driven by ambition, guided by the good counsel given him, he had striven valiantly to make his mark. Yet, when he entered the presence of P.O.D. Evergreen he felt some apprehension. Were his efforts known? Would they be appreciated? He wondered about that.

P.O.D. Evergreen put his fears at rest at once. He said with affection, "My boy, you have acquitted yourself nobly. I have received many reports on you, and all of them make clear not only your many talents but also the degree of hatred and respect you inspire in your department. That is your most gratifying testimonial. You will be put in charge of that department."

Charles struggled for words. "I owe it all to you, sir," he said with an effort.

"No, no, my boy. It is your own spirit, your determination to succeed at all costs, that must get the credit. But tell me one thing. You have lived by my precepts for a year. During that time have you found yourself doubting their wisdom and merit?"

"Never," Charles said, striking the desk before him with his fist. "Not even when I considered that by following them to the letter I was irrevocably consigning my immortal soul to hell!"

"Hell?" P.O.D. Evergreen rose and stood there, a towering figure suddenly unearthly in his majesty. "You dare use that word here?" Then his eyes grew warm with nostalgia; his words came gently, filling Charles with awful enlightenment. "From here to eternity, my boy, you must think of it only as —The Home Office."

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If you don't feel like this at breakfast . . .

"Our breakfasts are a disgrace to England—from Land's End to Berwick-on-Tweed, nothing but tea and toast."

SUSAN FERRIER, *Marriage*

Chafing Dishes

Breakfast techniques at the Welches', like many of their ways of thought, recalled an earlier epoch. The food was kept hot on the sideboard in what Dixon conjectured were chafing-dishes . . .

He noted with mild surprise how much and how quickly she was eating. The remains of a large pool of sauce were to be seen on her plate beside a diminishing mound of fried egg, bacon and tomatoes. Even as he watched she replenished her stock of sauce with a fat scarlet gout from the bottle. She glanced up and caught his look of interest, raised her eyebrows and said, "I'm sorry, I like sauce; I hope you don't mind," but not convincingly, and he fancied she blushed.

"That's all right," he said heartily; "I'm fond of the stuff myself." He pushed aside his bowl of cornflakes. They were of a kind he didn't like: malt had been used in their preparation. A study of the egg and bacon and tomatoes opposite him made him decide to postpone eating any himself. His gullet and stomach felt as if they were being deftly sewn up as he sat . . .

KINGSLEY AMIS, *Lucky Jim*

Disagreement All Round

We had scarcely sat down to breakfast when a fierce controversy broke out over our *plat de résistance*. My own claim that it was a vegetable marrow was brushed scornfully aside by Sandy, who said that he knew that it was a cucumber. On being told that cucumbers did not grow to that size, he said that anyone who knew anything about vegetables could see that it was a tropical cucumber . . .

Prolonged lack of food and drink is apt to fray the nerves. Our tempers were not at their best, and we both felt by now that we could have cheerfully used up our remaining strength in fighting each other over the identity of the rather sad-looking vegetable which lay between us, cut up into unappetising green slices already covered with sand and flies.

Fortunately a breach of the peace was avoided thanks to Sergeant Seekings, the only real agricultural expert of the party, who drew the fire of both parties by suggesting that the object of our controversy must be a kind of pumpkin, a diagnosis so manifestly outrageous that Sandy and I sank our differences in a united but entirely unsuccessful attempt to persuade Seekings that he was talking nonsense. Not long after eating it, whatever it was, we were all attacked by the most violent stomach-ache. Altogether it was an unsatisfactory vegetable.

FITZROY MACLEAN, *Eastern Approaches*

Taboo

Some folk they say
At break of day
Ecstatically awaken
And straightway rise
With joyful cries
To sniff the rashered bacon.
Their hearts are light, their heads are clear,
For repartee they're able,
And neatly buttoned they appear
Each morning at the table.

Well, doubtless they're a worthy crew,
More potent than a powerhouse.
But God forbid that they should do
Their breakfasting at our house.

PHYLLIS MCGINLEY, *Motto to Be Framed in a Guest-Room*

Dumb Waiter

We moved on to Giessen, and put up at the Rappe Hotel for the night, and ordered an early breakfast of an obliging waiter who talked English. "Coffee!" he exclaimed delightedly, catching at the word as if it were a really original idea. "Ah, coffee—very nice—and eggs? Ham with your eggs? Very nice—" "If we can have it broiled," I said. "Boiled?" the waiter repeated, with an incredulous smile. "No, not *boiled*," I explained. "*Broiled*." The waiter put aside this distinction as trivial, "Yes, yes, ham," he repeated, reverting to his favourite idea. "Yes, ham," I said, "but how cooked?" "Yes, yes, how cooked," the waiter replied, with the careless air of one who assents to a proposition more from good nature than from a real conviction of its truth.

The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll

We had left all our servants behind at Panjim, and not an iota of our last night's supper had escaped the ravenous maws of the boatmen.

Presently matters began to mend. The old lady recollected that in days of yore she had possessed a pound of tea, and, after much unlocking and rummaging of drawers, she produced a remnant of that luxury. Perseverance accomplished divers other feats, and after about an hour more of half-starvation we sat down to a breakfast composed of five eggs, a roll of sour bread, plantains, which tasted exactly like edible cotton dipped in *eau sucrée*, and a "fragrant infusion of the Chinese leaf" whose perfume vividly reminded us of the haystacks in our native land. Such comforts as forks or spoons were unprocurable, the china was a suspicious-looking article, and the knives were apparently intended rather for taking away animal life than for ministering to its wants...

RICHARD F. BURTON, *Goa, and the Blue Mountains*, 1851

Devilish Diet

...Gross Europeans who constantly munch
Too little at breakfast, too freely at lunch,
Sit sated in cafés, incapable souls,
And go to the devil on coffee and rolls—
Coffee and rolls,
Windy wet rolls;
At coffee
I'm scoffy,
I execrate rolls!

A. P. HERBERT

Mantle of Feathers

IN the spring of 1925, someone gave to my wife a feather mantle. I doubt if any woman since the fabulous days of Cleopatra ever received such a marvellous gift.

It came from a grizzled sea-captain, a Frenchman, whose son had been under my surgical care at one time during the Great War, and whose life I had been instrumental in saving. It was at a time when successful operations on the heart were very rare.

Under the pressure of war conditions, in that atmosphere of extraordinary risk, and with the courage of youth in my veins, I had ventured some hitherto unknown audacities with the chief organ of life. Young Pierre Barnavaux was dying slowly in great agony when I was transferred to the Base Hospital where he had been lying for over a year. The X-ray plates showed clearly a minute fragment of shrapnel lying under the heart, slowly scratching his life away at every beat. I dared an operation, and holding his throbbing heart in my hand for less than a second, I extracted that supposedly inaccessible bit of shell. The man recovered. I gave him life, freed from pain. He gave me a reputation which was the foundation of my present fortune. But over and above this, he gave me lasting love and gratitude: he and his father.

And so my wife, many years afterwards, received from Captain Barnavaux' hands a cloak which might have been one of the world's wonders.

"I have known of these things," he told us, "for a long time, and in my great desire to give you something precious and rare, this cloak has often been present in my dreams. There is a special reason why such a cloak is almost impossible to obtain.

by Janet Whitney

However, there is nothing, nothing, I would not feel it right to do for you. And here, at last, is something that may give you pleasure, surpassing pleasure, through one that is dearer to you than yourself. Your wife's loveliness in this mantle will be of visions beyond mortal, and all your wealth, were you many times as rich, could not purchase it for her!"

So saying, a little mysteriously, he opened out the mantle. Mantle, did I say? It might have been a rainbow or a sunset, of such intangible, unearthly beauty was the marvellous garment he displayed. It was made of hundreds and thousands of feathers of bright-plumaged birds, woven or sewn together in unconscious designs that made dream-pictures before the eye such as one sees in the clouds or in reflections in water. Brilliant as emeralds and rubies and burnished gold, soft as prismatic light, it was a dazzling revelation of the possibilities of colour.

Sybil and I were both a little dizzy as we gazed; it intoxicated, like a heady wine.

"Where—what—?" stammered my lovely wife at last.

Captain Barnavaux' eyes had travelled from one of us to the other, delighting in our complete confusion.

"From the South Seas," he said. "It is almost a lost art. But there is still one island, the most remote from civilisation, where the people pursue in secret their ancient customs. They are a gentle people, with the souls of artists. The making of these cloaks is the chief art of their women. The men kill the birds, silently, gently, with a species of very long blowpipe, most accurate in aim. So they provide the feathers for the cloaks. Every cloak takes three years to make, and I do not know how it is done, even then. They are carefully guarded. They are seldom seen!"

"There are pictures in the cloak," said Sybil, in a strange tone. "I can see landscapes, beautiful and wild. Such as I never saw . . ."

Captain Barnavaux looked at her, with his face of wrinkled leather that seldom betrayed his thoughts; and he rolled up the cloak.

"*Voilà!*" he said, laying it down on the couch with one of his neat, final gestures. "And now I will beg leave to bid you adieu and return to my ship."

His ship was then lying in the dock of New York, and nothing would persuade him not to return at once downtown to her. I went with him to the door, trying to express my thanks, and making inquiries after his son.

When I returned to the drawing room, my wife was lying on the couch, wrapped in the cloak. She lay straight and flat, and the length of the cloak was what struck me first. It covered her from head to foot. A little cap-shaped piece went round her head. Then her extraordinary pallor and immobility made my heart stop. "Sybil!" I cried, and reached her in a stride.

She, who had never fainted before, and whose heart was in excellent condition, was in a dead faint.

It was an explanation rarely tendered to a doctor that she gave me some hours later in her sweet, slow voice, leaning her head weakly against my shoulder.

"I still feel just exhausted, dearest," she said, "with terrible joy. When I wrapped myself in the cloak, I began to tremble and feel as a violin might feel that is being tuned to more than concert pitch. I lay down because I had to, borne down by an excitement, a weight of rapture that was more than human. I felt as if I was being swept away from earth by a strong current of colour that was like music, and music that was like colour. Words cannot tell of it. I could not bear it!"

I did not tell her how near death her high-strung organism had been.

"Some poison or other," I muttered, "in that damn cloak . . ."

"Poison?" She opened starry eyes at me and smiled with tender scorn. After a moment she said, "You've hidden the cloak, haven't you?"

"I have indeed!"

But she expressed no desire to see the cloak again.

I put her to bed like a child, and watched her uneasily throughout the night. Her tranquillity was too deep, her breath too light.

By morning she was more herself again. More human. She ate a hearty breakfast, was in a frivolous and mundane mood, and had a little colour in her cheeks.

"What horrible ties you wear, darling!" she said, when I brought her breakfast-tray myself. "I expect it's to make your patients feel worse, so that they'll give you more credit when they get well."

Not a word about the cloak.

I very gently bit her little finger. It was reassuringly solid.

It was late afternoon before I could find release from my professional duties to attend to the disposal of the fatal feather mantle.

I had left it securely folded in my safe. When I went to my study to get it, I was startled by the quiet entrance of my wife behind me, dressed for the street.

"I'm coming with you," she said softly.

"Where?" I said, stupidly.

"To Captain Barnavaux, to give it back," she said. "The precious thing, too precious for keeping." There was regret and longing in her voice.

I hesitated. "Perhaps if I had it thoroughly fumigated—" I said.

She made a little face at me, scornfully sweet.

"Stupid!" she said. And then her eyes looked far away beyond me, full of something unutterable.

Imagination, of course. But people do get ideas. And ideas can do queer things . . . I bundled her into the car and drove her downtown.

Together we found Captain Barnavaux, on the bridge of the *Geneviève,* and I handed him my carefully-wrapped parcel.

"I'm sorry," I said. "We value it, but for some obscure reason, we can't keep it."

His leathern face changed perceptibly.

"For me," he said, almost defiantly, "I am materialist. I believe in nothing. Surely this did not carry—bad dreams?"

His eyes pierced my wife's with a curious mixture of scepticism and apprehension.

"Bad?" said my wife, with her wonderful smile. "Nothing bad, monsieur. Ineffable bliss—nothing more. Too great, however, for me to bear. We wish to return it to its owner!"

"Ah—its owner!" said Captain Barnavaux; and, to my great astonishment, left us abruptly, the package under his arm.

I have never seen him since. I hope he feels that he owes me nothing now.

A year later, when my son was four months old, I was in the smoking room of my club, listening with uncommon pleasure to the tales of an old friend, an inveterate traveller, who was making one of his brief halts in the regions of civilisation.

Talk had been running on the Arctic, and the prismatic colours of ice, when our friend, with one of his quick turns down an unexpected slant of association, said, "Talk about colour, though—no-one knows the word who hasn't seen the feather mantles of the South Seas. And they are rarely seen. There's a good reason why. It's a secret art, a regular cult—they know, those peaceful sons and daughters of nature, how to

keep a thing dark! Years they take to make the cloaks and they won't sell them, not, not for more than their weight in gems. After all, what's wealth to them? Only once did I ever hear of one being had, and that was stolen by an atheist of a Frenchman. Oh, he left a rich price behind. But the thing was not for sale. He stole it from a young girl they called Singing Bird. They said her joyous temperament, though she was dying of consumption, was a by-word even among that happy people. And I bet they made her one of their best. They say she even helped to make it. She was that kind! The fear of death was not in her. She was sure of a future life. Died singing, I was told."

"But," I objected, startled, "died singing, after she'd lost her precious cloak? "

"Ah, she didn't know about that, you see. It was her tomb he robbed. The thing's a shroud."

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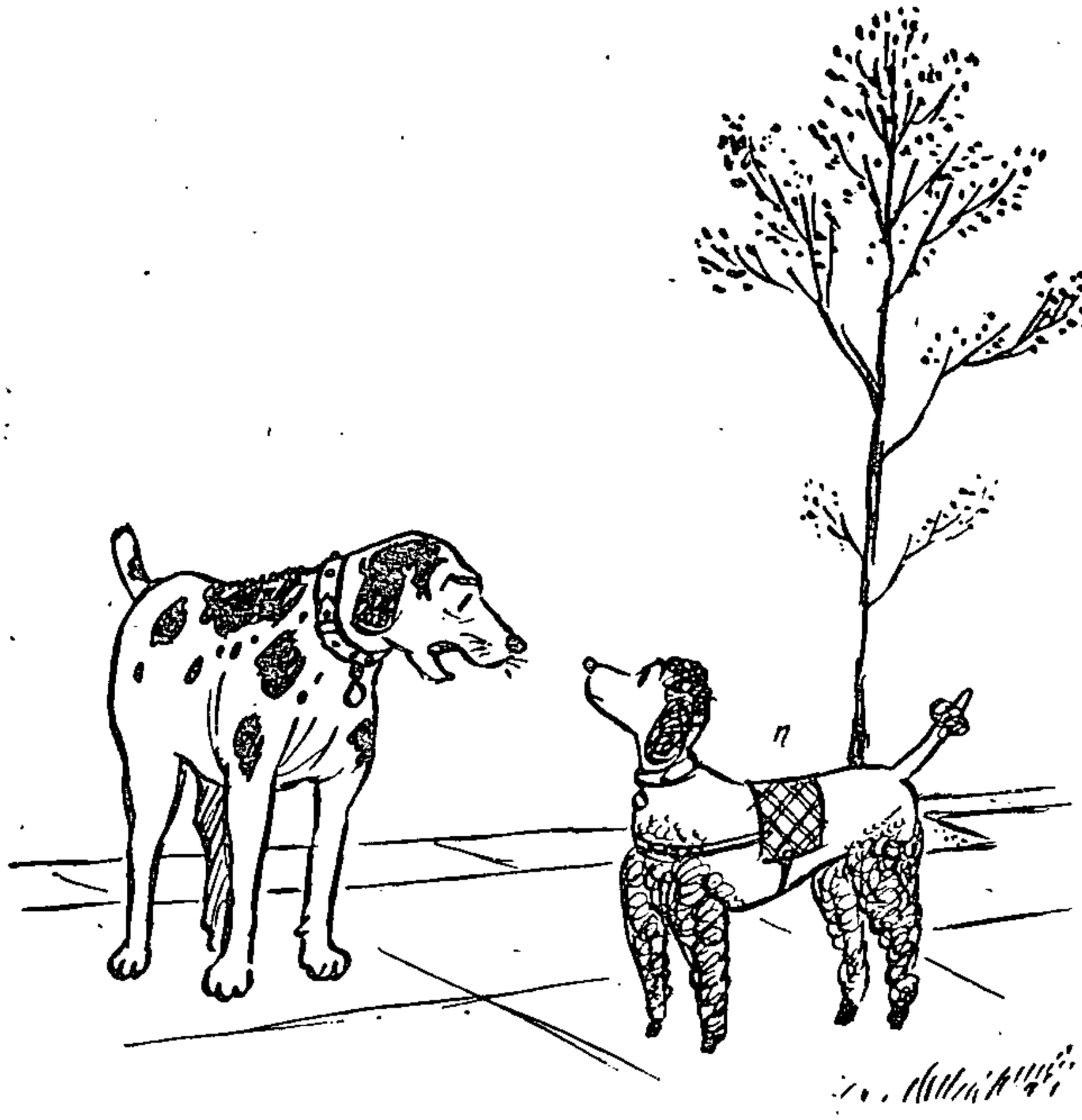

"You're not a dog. You're just a status symbol."

The Heidelberg

Affair

The speed, the finesse
of that cut was beautiful –
a terrifying thing to see . . .
there was nothing I could do

by Lionel Davidson

IT is not often a man will face serious physical injury in order to demonstrate a principle. Few people would have thought Hank Engert such a man. He was a big roly-poly of a fellow with round, protuberant eyes and a crew-cut and a rather odd quality of gentle self-mockery. Not a man cast in the heroic mould, one would have thought.

I met him at the American air base. The Americans had got together a fencing team, and our British association had arranged a few fixtures for them. The night I met Engert, they were fighting a RAF team.

I don't think I have ever seen a more preposterous figure for a swordsman than Engert. Some big men are light on their feet, but Engert was not; his every movement was clumsy and elephantine. He was matched with the sabre against a young squadron leader, very slim and very fast, who took the fight by a wide margin. Engert's rueful antics afterwards occasioned a great deal of amusement. He seemed very well liked.

We were drinking in the mess, and I found myself standing next to him. I asked curiously why he had taken up fencing.

He smiled at me amiably: "I want to go to Heidelberg."

It seemed his unit had been stationed in Heidelberg after the war—Engert had not been with them then—and had established friendly connections in the town. The Heidelberg Fencing Association had invited them to a match, and Engert, whose people came from the town, was very keen to go. This was the reason he had taken up fencing.

I smiled when I heard this, because of course the Heidelberg team is very good indeed. I have fought twice against two of their second strings, and lost both times.

"Hell, I know I can't win," he said. "I just want to go there. Three guys from our team went back to the States recently and we're short on numbers. I'd certainly appreciate it if you'd put in a word for me with our captain—Honneger over there."

I didn't think I could conscientiously recommend Engert for any team that had to fight Heidelberg, so I kept quiet. Later, the party got very convivial, and the subject fortunately did not arise again. I drove back to town with the RAF party at three in the morning.

Each event I had refereed at the American air base had ended the same way. I thought now that it was time someone else took a turn. I was getting too old to stay up half the night drinking with these strapping young men.

All the same I was extremely flattered to get an invitation a few weeks later to accompany them to Heidelberg. There was no necessity for them to opt for a British official; it was a very nice gesture, and I accepted.

We flew out together, and I was astonished to see Engert in the party. He noticed my surprise and joined me, grinning. "Well, I finally made it," he said. "But, by golly, it's been a triumph of mind over matter. I've been practically sleeping with a sword."

We chatted all the way there, and again I found him the most likeable of men—friendly, gentle, civilised, with a little private atmosphere of self-mockery always about him.

The Germans played host with much splendour. They put us up at the best hotel in the place, and after dinner threw a large reception at their club.

I had visited this curious place before. It was called the *Kneip Halle*, and in the old emperor's time it had belonged to one of the quasi-military students' corps. It was a long, low hall with blackened oak walls decked with blood-stained flags and shields. It was quite a large room, but there were only three tiny windows, latticed and deeply recessed. Here, students had kept watch for the police when duels were being fought.

Repellent as it was, the hall was a glittering spectacle that night. The women were beautifully gowned; the men in white ties. Everywhere jewellery flashed and white-jacketed waiters wove in and out.

Amid this scene of sophistication, the party of Americans looked strangely young and innocent. I have never cared very much for the Germans, but now, in the company of the young

Americans, I felt an acute distaste for them and their barbarous hall. The airmen did not appear to feel it; they were making themselves very pleasant to their hosts.

Engert indeed had gone further than this. I saw with surprise that he was seated on a sofa with the most attractive girl in the room—a very beautiful, rather voluptuous brunette—and they were talking with great animation. The girl's male escort, a slim, waspish little fellow with glistening black hair, was standing rather sourly beside them.

The other Americans remained standing, and I noticed Honneger, the team captain, frowning at the sofa once or twice. Peals of laughter were now coming from Engert and the girl.

"Hey, fellas!" Engert cried suddenly. "If this doesn't beat all! You'll never believe it. Hilde here—no, let me work it out myself," he said, putting his hand on the girl's arm as she tried to interrupt him. "My mother was a kitchenmaid in Hilde's grandmother's—"

They sorted it out between them with much amusement, and Honneger, the team captain, seizing the opportunity to break a few minutes. His eyes were on the sofa.

I walked over to the girl's escort, trying to remember his name.

"Herr von Nurigen, isn't it?"

He smiled stiffly. "How courteous of you to remember me. It's a pleasure to have you in Heidelberg again."

I thanked him and we made rather heavy conversation for a few minutes. His eyes were on the sofa.

"Are you fighting tomorrow?" I asked, to distract him.

He said he was.

"What's your weapon?"

"It is immaterial to me. I believe I am matched for the sabre."

"The sabre," I said, and paused. "Who are you fighting?"

"The gentleman sitting next to my fiancée," he said, smiling frostily at the back of Engert's crew-cut.

The party broke up early to allow the visitors a good night's rest. Engert didn't seem to have noticed that he had offended von Nurigen, and I didn't mention it. It looked as if Honneger might have a few words to say; and anyway it was no business of mine.

I had a rather odd feeling about it all the same.

The Americans took it easy next day, and after a light

dinner we went to the *Kneip Halle* at eight. There were fewer women this time, but I noticed von Nurigen's fiancée. Neither she nor Engert spoke to each other, and it looked as if a few discreet words had been said on both sides. I was curiously relieved at this. A sabre match, even with both contestants properly masked, is no occasion for personal animosity.

The Americans had improved since I saw them last, and actually managed to take two of the first five bouts. They were very tickled at this, and a good deal of joshing went on as Engert stood up for the sixth bout.

After the usual courtesies, he took up quite a reasonable stance, and waited for his man. Nurigen did the same. For half a minute there was no action at all, and Engert became baffled. Any competent swordsman would have advised him, when facing a man so obviously experienced as Nurigen, to keep his patience and maintain his position. Engert did not do this. In a sudden flurry, he stamped his foot and went in.

Nurigen stood absolutely firm. I doubt if his body moved an inch. His wrist only moved, fractionally, tying up Engert in the most beautiful demonstration I have ever seen. When Engert, breathing hard, withdrew in disorder, Nurigen went in like a wasp, three, four, five, six magnificent points picked up almost before they could be registered.

He must have repeated this half a dozen times, and after the second it was obvious to all that he was intent only on making a fool of the American. There was no semblance of a contest. It was like some champion boxer inviting a child to hit him, cleverly covering and then opening his guard to dust the child lightly on the nose. He made no attempt to follow up his advantages. It was an extremely insulting and cruel demonstration.

When the result was announced there was an embarrassed silence, and then a little desultory clapping as Engert withdrew his mask, grinning ruefully.

"You certainly had me foxed that time," he said, holding out his hand to Nurigen. Incredibly, he was the only person in the room not to realise what Nurigen had been doing to him.

Nurigen touched his hand briefly. "Perhaps you will have your revenge another time," he said coldly, and turned away to join his fiancée.

Immediately, everyone was very nice to Engert. Someone handed him a drink and he was soon the centre of a small circle.

The Americans did not win again, and the Germans, victors by six to two, became extremely hospitable. Champagne flowed very freely, and I found myself practising my halting German on the statuesque wife of the club president. I was so involved in this that I did not for a few moments see her eyes had gone wide and glazed, and that a small commotion was going on behind me.

Engert was dabbing with his handkerchief at a wet patch on Nurigen's clothing: he had upset his drink. Every time he tried to apologise, he shook uncontrollably. The effect was to make those standing round have difficulty in controlling their own smiles. Even Nurigen's fiancée seemed to be blowing her nose rather hard.

It was impossible to say exactly what happened next. It seemed that Engert, still apologising, turned to get Nurigen another drink, and as he did so stumbled and trod on his foot. All that I could see was Nurigen trying to withdraw his foot, his arms clutching wildly as he fell backwards. He fell quite heavily, but he was up in an instant, spitting almost, like a cat.

"Gee, I'm most terribly sorry," Engert said. "I'm such a clumsy brute. Won't you please let me—?"

Nurigen said something then in German, very sharply. I couldn't catch what it was, but Engert evidently did.

"Now just a minute," he said, slowly. "I said I was sorry. It was an accident."

A number of the Germans closed in round Nurigen to pacify him, but he shook himself, cat-like, and rapped out something else. Engert, flushing darkly, moved heavily forward, and at the same moment, Nurigen slapped his face twice, very quickly and quite hard.

The whole incident was so swift and bizarre that for a few seconds there was a shocked silence with everyone motionless. Then the Americans leapt on Engert, dragging him away, and the Germans surrounded Nurigen. In the space of a couple of minutes there was such pandemonium that the president had to shout his apology at the top of his voice.

"It's nothing at all," Honneger told him. "Just a stupid mix-up. They both lost their tempers. We'll get them to shake hands in a minute."

This seemed very unlikely. Engert, red in the face, was so extraordinarily angry that I couldn't take my eyes off him. It appeared that Nurigen had told him he should have stayed in the kitchen with his mother, and this, more than the slap, had driven him almost berserk.

Nurigen could not be induced to apologise, and presently he went. The president and several of the committee tried hard to smooth things over, but the heart had gone out of the party. Shortly afterwards, it broke up.

We made a sombre journey back to the hotel. The Americans headed straight for the bar, but I was in no mood for further drinking, and went up to my room.

I have never been a very easy sleeper, and after this upset I knew I would not sleep for hours. I put on a dressing-gown and sat up reading in a chair. Quite a long time later I began to nod over the book, and got up drowsily to undress. At the same moment the house phone began to buzz, very loudly in that quiet room. I jumped, and stumbled over to the thing.

It was the night porter, talking rapidly in German. I understood him to say that von Nurigen was below and wanted to see me. I looked at my watch. It was half-past two.

"You are sure you have the right room? He does not ask for Herr Engert, the American?"

No, there was no mistake. Herr Engert was already below with him. Would I come down, or should they come up?

I could not make head or tail of this and stood there blinking owlishly at the wall fixture, more tired than I thought. Half-past two in the morning, Nurigen calling at the hotel. A very unpleasant suspicion came into my mind.

"I'll come down," I said.

I quickly got out of my dressing-gown and into my jacket, and went along the corridor. The porter had brought the lift, and we went down silently.

There were three of them waiting in the hall, Nurigen, Engert and a man I had not seen before. Engert came towards me as I stepped out of the lift. His face was white and moon-like.

"I'm sorry to get you up. Were you asleep?"

"No, no, it's perfectly all right. What is it?"

"This guy has come along to offer me satisfaction." His voice dropped in embarrassment at the word.

"Satisfaction? What do you mean, satisfaction? Has he apologised to you?"

"There is nothing I wish to retract," Nurigen said briskly, stepping forward himself. "I have offered this gentleman the time-honoured remedy if he feels he has suffered insult, and he has accepted. He wishes you to serve him at the *Kneip Halle* in thirty minutes' time."

I gaped at each of them in turn. "You mean you want to fight a duel? Have you gone out of your mind?"

"It's quite all right," Engert said. "I'd like to do it."

His simple, childishly-confident statement rendered me literally speechless. I just took his arm and shook it, trying to find words. "You don't know how—you can't fight a duel with this man. He'll cut you to pieces, don't you understand? He'll put you in hospital. Kick his backside if you want—you're fully entitled to," I said, glaring at little Nurigen, "but, for God's sake... Does Honneger know about this?"

"No, he doesn't, and he's not going to," Engert said. "Look, if you don't want to help me, forget it. I've got no right to ask you, but I'm going to fight him anyway."

The situation was nonsensical, and it was difficult to find reasonable words. I suddenly realised how terribly tired I was. I wanted only to push this overgrown boy upstairs, get him safely to bed without argument.

I said, "I shall get in touch with the police immediately."

"That is entirely up to you," Nurigen said. "We have made our offer."

"Let me at least," I said desperately to Engert, "get Honneger. Don't you want an American with you?"

"I've told you already," Engert said, smiling patiently. "You know as well as I do what Honneger would say. And he's my superior officer. Well, thanks, anyway. I'm ready to come with you, gentlemen."

The stranger, a tall, hatchet-faced man, now spoke for the first time, and Engert turned to me. "He says we'll have to change the venue as a precaution, if you don't come. Look, you can't stop this thing. Won't you reconsider? I'd certainly appreciate your help and advice in this fight."

"But you don't have to do it—it's the most senseless thing I ever heard! This man has no right—"

"I know all that," Engert said heavily. "Would you just please accept that I've got a perfectly valid reason for going through with this brawl and come and help me?"

I had never in my life been in such a grotesque situation, and didn't know what was for the best. I thought: if my brain were only clearer, if I could find the words to convince him that this would be no brawl but rather a surgical operation with Nurigen cutting at will... But I knew he would not listen. At least, by being present, I might prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

I went silently with them to the car.

A man was waiting outside the *Kneip Halle*. "This gentleman is a doctor," Nurigen said. "He has experience of these affairs. With your permission he will act as referee."

He unlocked the door and we went in. The hall with its flags and shields was a rather horrible sight at that hour. The hatchet-faced man swiftly placed small boards in the windows to black out the place, and Nurigen locked the door again behind us.

The protective armour and the duelling swords were in a sort of small museum off the changing-room, and the doctor and Nurigen's second brought them out. I helped Engert into his equipment silently, watching the others to see how it went on.

There was a thick jacket of wadded leather to protect body and arms, with a collar up to the chin of some kind of silk whipcord. A pair of barbarous iron goggles that stood out like small teacups protected the eyes and were buckled at the back of the head.

I had never in my life seen such a monstrous sight as these two men creaking in their gross uniforms and prepared to cut each other's heads and faces. Engert's gentle eyes blinked at me from the iron cups. With his crew-cut he looked extraordinarily like some overgrown child dressed as a spaceman.

"Now listen carefully to me," I said softly, "and don't try to think for yourself or argue. This man is out of your class so don't try to attack him. He'll try to mark your face. The answer is to keep your guard up. Never lower it—don't parry thrusts to the body or try to fence him. He'll tempt you to do that. Keep the sword in front of your face all the time and let him do the work. Do you understand?"

Engert nodded, rather tensely.

The doctor was carefully wiping the swords with disinfectant, and when he had done, called both parties to the centre of the room. There was some mumbo-jumbo of question and answer, rapped out quickly in German—no doubt a formal statement of insult and a demand for an apology—and then a brief recital of the rules. So far as I could understand it, the fight would last twenty minutes made up of six two-and-a-half-minute rounds, with short breaks between the rounds.

The doctor then motioned to me and Nurigen's second to step back, and when we had done so, stepped back two paces himself.

"*Auf die Mensur bindet die Klingen!*" he said.

The men crossed swords.

"*Los!*"

The duel had begun.

I think I was in more of a panic than Engert. At least he seemed to have remembered my last hurried words. He stood very firmly with his guard well up, and his wrist moving extremely well. Nurigen watched him very carefully, clinically almost, his sword moving very little, testing, feeling, for all the world like some surgeon deciding where to cut.

I felt my own wrist moving to parry the German's flickering blade, and put my hands in my trouser pockets.

The first round was over mercifully without damage. The doctor, who had raised his wrist to look at his watch, cried "*Halt!*" and both swords dropped.

"You're doing very well," I said softly to Engert, supporting his sword wrist to rest it. "Just keep doing that. He'll give you a few openings this time, I expect. Leave them absolutely alone, do you hear?"

Engert nodded, but said nothing. He was breathing rather harder than the exertion demanded, but I could feel no trace of tremor in his wrist.

The doctor looked up and signalled, and I released his wrist. "Remember, let him do the work. Leave him absolutely alone."

"*Los!*"

Again the two men faced each other, and again Nurigen merely touched, prodded, felt. But imperceptibly he increased the pace until the light, ringing blows were coming two or three to the second, and towards the end he swayed this way and that, opening his guard fractionally, presenting the target. Engert let him alone.

In the last few seconds, without any warning at all, Nurigen stepped lightly to one side—there was a just-discernible interruption in the clatter, almost as if a dumb note had been struck on the piano, and a bright red line four inches long opened on Engert's cheek.

In the same moment, the round ended, and the doctor, crying, "*Halt!*" stepped forward to examine the cheek.

"Superficial," he said to me in English. "I presume you wish to continue?"

My heart was beating so fast that I had difficulty in speaking.

"We continue," Engert said, rather loudly.

I supported his wrist and said nothing at all during this break, for indeed there was nothing I could say. The speed

and finesse of that cut was a beautiful, terrifying thing to see. It was plain now that Nurigen had decided just that one stroke from the beginning of the round; his feints and weaves had led directly to it, and there was nothing I could tell Engert that would prevent him taking as many more as the German wished. His only hope was that the slighter man would tire before doing any real damage; his only defence was his strong wrist.

Nurigen's blade was wiped and disinfected before they started again, and in the next two rounds that ghastly dumb note occurred three times more; each one a painful, stinging flip to the scalp. I could feel my knuckles tensing and turning in my pockets to parry the German's lightning thrusts. My heart was thumping very unpleasantly, and I felt sick.

There was no force to any of the blows; it was evident Nurigen did not wish yet to wound seriously enough to stop the fight. He wanted to cut and graze and scar the American to the point of fury; and he wanted to demoralise that fury so that Engert would not dare to face him any longer and would withdraw.

It seemed to me, looking at the American's pitiful face, that it was time he did this. The blood was streaming down his forehead and from his cheek. The whipcord collar was gluey with it, and it had got between the goggles on to his eyebrows.

I said, "For God's sake, man, you've had enough. What do you care if he wins? It proves only that he's a better swordsman, and we knew that before you started. There's nothing fair or decent about this. He's just cutting you about as he wants."

"How many more rounds?" Engert said.

"Two."

His eyes were blinking in the iron cups. His mouth was set very tightly. "How many times has he cut me?"

"Four."

"That's with me just defending myself," he said, with a certain grim humour. "I couldn't do worse if I tried to hit him. You reckon I could hit him?"

It was just possible that he now might. He was hurt, and, the German might think, already demoralised, with only enough spirit left to continue his clumsy, unvarying defence. Nurigen had given up all semblance of guard. He was merely executing fancy thrusts, some to cut, most to frighten. Engert might well surprise him.

I did not tell him this because any fumbling cut he managed

to get through might enrage Nurigen to the point of wounding him seriously. But I must have paused too long, or perhaps he reasoned it out for himself, for I felt his wrist tighten.

"Go easy," I said. "Don't take any stupid chances."

"*Los!*"

The moment Nurigen opened, I knew he meant to increase the pressure still further this round. His sword point moved so fast round Engert's head it looked like a halo. I don't think there can be anything more demoralising than to face a man out of one's class with the sure knowledge that he means to hurt and punish. Engert stood up to this with a certain shocked nobility; bitterly angry, using his wits and his courage, and getting hurt all the same. I had a hot, flooding desire to throw myself on the German and beat him without mercy.

In the first half minute of the hailstorm, he opened up a cut on Engert's other cheek. When the doctor signalled them to continue, his sword point played all round this cheek, never quite touching, always able to, his lips pursed in a smile of concentration.

Towards the end of the round, he executed the nimble side-step that preceded his real cuts, and prodded to the scalp. Engert gave then the finest demonstration of controlled courage I have ever witnessed. Instead of parrying the thrust to his sore head—as almost anyone would automatically have done—he dropped his guard, laying himself quite open to the painful cut. And as Nurigen flashed in, his own sword came round in a tremendous swishing arc.

"*Halt!*" cried referee and second together, almost before the blow landed. But nothing could have stopped that blow; I doubt if Nurigen was even aware of it.

There was a colossal clang, the whir of a broken blade twirling through the air, and Nurigen stumbled. He appeared actually to be leaning against Engert, and when Engert stepped back, he crumpled slowly to the floor.

I think all of us exclaimed in shock and horror as we hurried to the fallen man. He was on his face, and we turned him over. The doctor carefully lifted his head and examined it slowly, and then he stared at us in astonishment. There was not a mark on Nurigen.

"His goggles," Engert said. He was still standing, panting heavily. "I think I hit his goggles."

The doctor carefully lifted the goggles and grunted. Nurigen

had the fanciest-looking black eye I have ever seen. The release of strain at this somewhat comical and humiliating injury for a swordsman was so great that I sat back on my heels and felt a vacuous smile spread over my face. There was presently a very odd sound from the two Germans. They were chuckling. In half a minute the three of us were rocking back on our heels helpless with laughter.

Nurigen must have been out for two or three minutes, and when he came to he was in a vicious temper.

"No more fighting, I am afraid," the doctor said, smiling broadly. "You are slightly concussed."

Nurigen stood up and stamped his foot. His face was chalk white and his lips in a thin line. "I congratulate you," he said, holding out his hand to Engert.

Engert looked at the hand and knocked it roughly aside. "Congratulate me!" he cried. "What in hell have you got to congratulate me for? Why, you impossible little louse, can't you learn anything?"

I noticed for the first time that he was still in a towering rage. He had been mopping his head with a towel during the somewhat hysterical hilarity, and he now bunched his huge fist in front of Nurigen's face.

"You see this?" he said. "If I'd lost this brawl I'd have beaten your ears off with it. I'm bigger than you and I can always do that. But it doesn't give me any *right* to do it. You don't have to congratulate me—don't you see that? The only reason I fought you was to demonstrate that; because one way or the other you'd have got yourself beat up, brother. And you know what that proves?"

He was literally shaking with rage, and the doctor, busily sponging Nurigen's eye, motioned me to stop him. I put my hand on his arm, but he brushed it off.

"It proves that a big ape can always hurt a little one!" he shouted. "That's all it proves. It doesn't mean he's got a better case, or he's got any right to hurt him. Any mean guy with some fancy way of hurting people has got to learn that little thing, and I just hope you've learned it."

This seemed to me doubtful; Nurigen's sour little face was creased in a most venomous scowl.

When the doctor had finished with him, he patched up Engert. His wounds looked a great deal worse than they were; the cuts were all minor and unlikely to leave much trace. All the same, he smelled like a casualty ward. When we left without the others, he was still tensed up. There were

no taxis at that hour, however, and on the walk back he gradually became silent.

In the hotel, he shook my hand. "I'm sorry to have dragged you into this thing."

"So am I." I was tired, and very short with him. "The whole thing was absurd and unnecessary."

"You think that?" he said seriously. "You don't think he's learned a lesson?"

"Only to be more cautious and strike harder next time."

"And the doctor and that other guy?"

"I didn't lose a night's sleep to show a small group of Germans that violence doesn't pay. It's getting very late."

"Yeah. Well," he said, stepping clumsily from one foot to the other, "you've got to fight that kind of thing wherever you find it. Peaceable people have got to."

There was a certain unapologetic, invincible freshness of spirit here that, despite the irritations, one could not but admire. Perhaps, after all, it was true that one had to go on restating the obvious; that every generation had to go on restating it with whatever courage it could muster. And certainly Engert had shown high courage in his maladroit tilt at the enemy. There was something very American about this; and perhaps it had not been so absurd and unnecessary after all.

So, thinking this, I held out my hand to him. "Goodnight, Don Quixote," I said, unable to repress a smile; and went up to bed a good deal more cheerful than anyone has a right to be in that bloodthirsty town.

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ANSWERS TO CRICKET QUIZ ON PAGE 17

1. F. G. Mann.
2. 1961.
3. W. A. Oldfield.
4. R. Gilchrist.
5. 1962. It hasn't taken place since, owing to the abolition of the amateur status in first-class cricket.
6. 1962.
7. Worcestershire.
8. Australia and England won one Test match each, the other three matches being draws.
9. (a) Queensland. (b) Victoria. (c) New South Wales.
10. (a) Pakistan. (b) India. (c) South Africa.

A SQUIRREL TO SOME IS A SQUIRREL, BUT. . . .

The squirrel with his tail curved up
Like half a silver lyre . . .

WINIFRED WELLES, *Silver for Midas*

By Leaps and Bounds

Strictly speaking, I believe it is necessary to get rather special permission from the Ministry of Agriculture to keep a grey squirrel in captivity . . .

We got him weaned first on to bread and milk and then on to nuts and wheat and toast and fruit. I used to prefer watching him eat wheat. Small as it was, he'd sit there twirling each grain between his forefeet as accurately and fast as if it had been a hazel-nut.

Then, as he became three-parts grown, he learned to leap, and we began to get the real thrill and joy that squirrels provide . . . At first he would jump no more than a foot from his shelf on to my arm. But he needed no food or other inducement to try. It obviously came naturally to him and he loved it. Monkeys, swinging on their trees at the zoo, were pale amateurs beside him. His tiny claws could get a grip where no grip seemed possible. He would career around his "gymnasium": like the champion skater at an ice show.

When he was tired, he'd retire to his box and utter queer guttural grunts of affection, until we thrust a finger in to scratch his belly, ears, or chin. He was a delightful, affectionate character.

PHIL DRABBLE, *A Weasel in my Meatsafe*

Mr. S and Sex

Three hypothetical men . . . start across a street on a red light and get in the way of an oncoming automobile. A dodges successfully; B stands still "accepting the situation with calm and resignation" thus becoming one of my favourite heroes in modern *belles-lettrēs;* and C hesitates, wavers, and jumps backward and forward . . .

Let us single out what the Freudians would say about poor Mr. C. "Sex hunger," the Freudians would declare. "Always keyed up and irritable because of it . . . Automobile unquestionably has sex significance for him." . . .

I have seen the same behaviour that characterised Mr. C. displayed by a squirrel (Mr. S) that lives in the grounds of my house in the country.

He is a fairly tame squirrel, happily mated and not sex-hungry, if I am any judge, but nevertheless he frequently runs out toward my automobile, and then hesitates, wavers, jumps forward and backward, and occasionally would run right into the car except that he is awfully fast on his feet and that I always hurriedly put on the brakes of the 1935 V-8 Sex Symbol that I drive.

JAMES THURBER, *Sex Ex Machina*

Tricky

Like a small grey
coffee-pot,
sits the squirrel.
He is not

all he should be,
kills by dozens
trees, and eats
his red-brown cousins.

The keeper on the
other hand,
who shot him, is
a Christian, and

loves his enemies,
which shows
the squirrel was not
one of those.

HUMBERT WOLFE, *The Grey Squirrel*

Suspect Stew

The crowd packed tight around the table, weaving and milling. The pilau and stew were passed around in paper dishes. The passing hat reached a lean, venerable farmer just as he had completed a tour of exploration through his pilau.

"No!" he shrilled, with the lustiness of an old man with a grievance.

"No, I ain't agoin' to give nothin! This here was advertised as a free meal and 'tain't nothin' but a dogged Georgia prayer-meetin'. Get a man here on promises and then go to pickin' his pocket! This food ain't fitten to eat, dogged Georgia rations, Brunswick stew and all. And he's done cooked the squirrel heads in the pilau, and that suits a damned Georgia Cracker but it don't suit me.

"I was born and raised in Floridy, and I'm pertickler. I don't want no squirrel eyes lookin' at me out o' my rations!"

MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS, *Cross Creek*

In the middle of a conversation, the squirrel would run up and down the smooth tree trunk as though there were nothing to it. Or he would sit upright on a swaying branch, balance himself comfortably with his bushy tail that stuck up so gracefully behind him, display his white chest, hold his little fore-paws elegantly in front of him, nod his head this way and that . . .

"Is it really you?" he shrilled, surprised and delighted. "I recognised you the minute you passed but I couldn't believe . . ."

"Where did you come from?" asked Bambi.

The merry little face in front of him grew quite troubled. "The oak is gone," he began plaintively. "My beautiful old oak, do you remember it? It was awful. He chopped it down!"

Bambi hung his head sadly. His very soul felt sorry for the wonderful old tree . . .

FELIX SALTEN, *Bambi*

Churlish Squirl

A squirrel to some is a squirrel,
To others, a squirrel's a squirl.
Since freedom of speech is the birthright of each,
I can only this fable unfurl:
A virile young squirrel named Cyril,
In an argument over a girl,
Was lambasted from here to the Tyrol
By a churl of a squirl named Earl.

OGDEN NASH, *The Squirrel*

OLD WILLIE

Those gorillas belonged to the Roaring Twenties

by William P. McGivern

THIS is a story I've heard told by old-timers around Chicago newspaper offices. They don't insist it's true, of course, since it hangs chiefly on the word of a reporter who was far more at home in speakeasies than he ever was at a typewriter. Still, parts of the tale can't be explained away as the splintered dreams of a drunk. Maybe that's why the old-timers go on telling the story . . .

It begins in 1927, prohibition time, when Chicago was run by a band of Sicilian immigrants under the austere leadership of a man named Al Capone. And it also begins when an amiable little man, whom everyone knew only as Old Willie, became interested in a shy Danish girl named Inger Anderson.

Willie was the handy man and janitor around the West Side boarding-house where Inger roomed. He was a straight-backed, light-stepping character, with drooping grey moustaches and pale-blue eyes. He could have been in his middle sixties or seventies—it was hard to say. Everyone at the boarding-house liked him because of his obliging, courteous manner and consistent good humour, but they didn't know very much about him; nor care a great deal.

Old Willie's interest in Inger was purely fatherly, of course. He knew she'd come from a Minnesota village and he felt she needed looking after in the big city. He fussed over her as if she were a baby. Inger was pretty capable despite her shyness, but she was touched by Old Willie's interest in her, and they became good friends.

Inger's ambition was to become a concert singer. She had a

pleasant, untrained voice which wouldn't have excited a small-town choirmaster, but she loved to sing and was ready to do almost anything to fulfil her dreams. She signed up for voice lessons in the evenings and found herself a job as a hotel maid through an employment agency. She was thrilled at her luck in finding work so quickly. What she didn't know was that the employment-agency director, spotting her as an earnest but unknowing Minnesota specimen, had assigned her to the hotel which was the headquarters of the Capone mob—the old Star at Wabash Avenue near Twelfth Street.

Considering this, considering that the Star was filled with as choice a collection of gorillas as were ever assembled under one roof, Inger got along okay for the first few weeks. She cleaned the rooms, made beds and kept her eyes cast down when the sharply dressed torpedoes stared insolently at her lovely, graceful figure and beautiful legs. One of the hoodlums, Blackie Cardina, a Sardinian with alert eyes and a strong, bold jaw, stared longer than any of the others and then grinned.

Old Willie was horrified when Inger told him where she was working. They were talking in the parlour at the time. Inger had just finished her lesson and had been telling Old Willie about the skating and sledding in Minnesota, and about a boy named Lars who wanted to marry her, and then she said something about the Star Hotel.

"Listen, you get out of that place," Old Willie said, shaking his head sternly. "Those are bad men, worse than rattlesnakes, and it's no place for a girl like you."

Inger was amused by Willie's anxiety. She was young and very confident, and the thought that she couldn't look out for herself struck her as funny. After all, she reasoned, she had been at the Star a month and no-one had bothered her yet.

About a week after this talk Inger came home much later than usual and went straight to her room. She didn't come down to eat, and she didn't practise her scales that night. Old Willie, vaguely troubled, tried to find out what was wrong, but she wouldn't open her door, or even talk to him. The next day the landlady brought Inger up some food and talked to her for an hour or so. When she came out her eyes were red, and that night she glared at all the men boarders as if they were particularly repellent species of vermin.

For a month things went on this way. Inger wasn't working at the Star any more. She stuck close to her room and wouldn't see anyone, not even Old Willie. Then he learned from the landlady that Inger was leaving.

That brought him to a decision. He went up and knocked firmly on the door. "You might as well open up," he said. "I'm sticking here until you do."

There was a wait, and then, in a tired voice, Inger told him to come in. She was in bed looking pale and ill. Old Willie sat beside her and patted her arm with a thin, long-fingered hand.

"You're in trouble, aren't you, Inger?" he said.

She looked away from him, staring out at the bare, black winter trees.

"Who is it?" Old Willie said. Something had changed in his voice; it was curiously hard, insistent.

"I can't talk about it."

"You got to, Inger. You got no father or brothers here."

She moaned softly. "They mustn't ever know."

"No need for that. Tell me about it."

Finally she told him, crying openly, her hand clutching his with desperate strength. It was the one they called Blackie, Blackie Cardina. He had followed her into a room, grinning. She had pleaded with him, begged him, and at last she had fought and screamed. But nothing had made any difference to Blackie. He had taken what he wanted . . .

When she finished, Old Willie sighed. "I'll have a talk with him," he said.

"No, no," Inger cried. "They—he'll kill you. You don't know what they're like."

"Now don't worry about me," Old Willie said in a soothing voice. "You try to sleep, and don't be fretting."

And with that he left her. Old Willie went first to his own room and reappeared in a few minutes wearing a long, black frayed overcoat. The landlady met him at the foot of the stairs and asked him where he was going. Old Willie didn't answer. He walked past her, his eyes fixed straight ahead, a tense, angry frown on his old face.

Old Willie reached the Star Hotel a little after noon. He stopped inside the revolving doors, looking like some country bumpkin who'd got into the wrong pew by mistake. And now, right at this point, is where the drunken reporter, Jake Mackey, enters the story in the rôle of an eyewitness. Jake was at the Star that afternoon, sitting on a sofa and talking to one of Capone's men. Maybe Jake was on a story. Maybe he was just hanging around for a drink. Anyway, he was there, drunker than usual, and he noticed Old Willie immediately,

because Old Willie with his drooping moustache and long black overcoat was a sight to catch and hold the eye.

Old Willie stopped a bellboy and asked him where he might find Blackie Cardina. The bellboy jerked his thumb towards a card game at the far end of the lobby.

Blackie was there, sitting behind a high stack of chips, a cigar in his strong teeth, grinning like a wolf because he was winning, and because, at that precise moment of his life, he thought the world was a place that had been kindly provided for him to loot, ravish and otherwise do with as he pleased.

He glanced up a few seconds later and saw the old man with drooping moustaches studying him sombrely. Blackie paid no attention to him; he had looked up as he figured the odds against filling a belly straight.

"Okay, I take a card," Blackie said, and snapped his fingers.

"Hold the deal," Old Willie said quietly. "Which of you is a rat called Blackie Cardina?"

Blackie looked up again, seeing Old Willie for sure this time, and his little dark eyes narrowed dangerously. "You aren't funny, old man," he said.

"I ain't trying to be," Old Willie said. "I'm a friend of a girl used to work here. You had your fun with her, you slimy, snake-eating bastard, and now you're going to pay for it. I want a thousand dollars from you. That'll help her out some. And you can figure the price cheap."

Blackie got to his feet and it was difficult to judge from his expression whether he would start laughing or cussing. "Look, old man, get out," he said at last, pointing to the door. "Get out. You hear? I don't want to kick an old man into the street. I'll let you walk, understand?" He got madder as he talked, and a flush of colour surged up his throat and stained his dark features. "Get out!" he shouted. "Get out, you dirty, rotten old bum! Get out of here!"

"One thousand dollars," Old Willie said, casually unbuttoning his long black overcoat.

The kill look in Blackie's eyes deepened. "Who sent you here? Who are you?" he shouted, and reached for the gun in his shoulder holster. "I'll teach you a lesson, goddamn it."

Old Willie said something then, something which only Jake Mackey seems to have heard, and he said it in a voice that was proud and hard and confident. After that, although it was all part of one smoothly-connected motion, Old Willie yelled, "Draw, you bastard!" and threw himself swiftly to one side in a low, springy crouch.

There was a lot of discussion later as to what exactly happened in the next few seconds. Two facts were incontrovertible: one, Old Willie somehow got a gun into his hand; and two, Blackie Cardina fell across the card table with a black hole burnt neatly into his forehead. No-one actually saw Old Willie draw a gun. The onlookers decided later it was probably fastened to a spring arrangement in his holster. Anyway, it got into his hand very fast, and the bullet from it got into Blackie's skull even faster.

Old Willie didn't let things get out of control. With a little wave of his big, old-fashioned revolver he backed Blackie's friends away from the table and then coolly plucked a wallet from Blackie's hip pocket.

He inspected the contents and stuffed the wallet into a pocket of his overcoat. After that he backed towards the doors, moving easily and lightly, the gun in his hand as steady as something carved from rock.

Jake Mackey said there was something about Old Willie then, something in his eye and manner, that made you want to shrink down in your chair and stay very quiet.

At the doors Old Willie made a short speech. "Sit tight for five minutes. First man don't think that's a good idea is going to get himself killed."

And then he walked out into the street and for five minutes a half dozen of Al Capone's hoodlums looked uneasily at Blackie's body, and occasionally glanced up at the clock above the lobby desk.

They weren't afraid to go outside, they said later. They weren't afraid of an old man in a tattered overcoat who'd been lucky enough to plug Blackie between the eyes. Still, they didn't go out and they didn't move.

Jake Mackey got on Old Willie's trail right after the five minutes were up, and by checking the cab companies he found a driver who had picked up an old party answering Willie's description at the intersection of Twelfth Street and Wabash Avenue. This took time, of course; it was late in the afternoon when Jake cautiously approached the boarding-house where the cab driver had taken Old Willie and had dropped him.

And by then it was too late. Old Willie had been there, all right, but only long enough to give Inger a roll of money, and then pack up his few things and leave.

He didn't say goodbye to anyone, but simply strolled off down the darkened street, a slender old man with faded blue

eyes and a curiously youthful stride. No-one watched him leave.

Jake Mackey was fascinated by what he'd seen at the Star Hotel and he hung around Inger to get all the facts she could recall about Old Willie.

She told him how secretive Old Willie had always been, and how he liked to listen to her sing, and so forth, but she couldn't tell him very much more.

He and Inger became good friends in the next week or so, and for a while Jake even thought he was falling in love with her. But nothing came of that. Inger had a miscarriage a week later, and after that packed up and went back to Minnesota.

She married the boy named Lars, and Jake carried the wedding announcement in his wallet, but finally lost it in a bar, the way clippings get lost in bars.

He never did pin down his story. He did a lot of checking on it, and spent a good deal of time in the library, but he never could prove it, and so he never wrote it.

Still, he *knew* that he had missed a great story by a hair's breadth, and in the years that followed he told the story around Chicago bars to anyone who would listen to him.

The thing that convinced him his story was true was the way Old Willie had handled that gun, and what Old Willie had said when Blackie asked him who he was—Blackie had asked him who he was, remember, just before digging for the gun in his shoulder holster. Old Willie's answer had held no significance for the Sicilian immigrants at the card table, but it had raised the hairs on the back of Jake Mackey's neck.

Old Willie had said, in a proud, hard, confident voice, "When I was a kid they called me Billy."

And that's the way the old-timers tell Jake Mackey's story. They don't insist it's true, of course—but they go on telling it.

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD (MAY ISSUE)

Across. 1, *Out and away.* 6, *Long.* 9, *Appreciate.* 10, *Fall.* 12, *Nebula.* 15, *Solid.* 18, *Alec.* 19, *Tourer.* 21, *Along.* 22, *Trollop.* 24, *Letty.* 25, *Degree.* 26, *Mass.* 28, *Tango.* 29, *Astray.* 34, *Moon.* 35, *Made to last.* 36, *Noel.* 37, *Mint master.*

Down. 1, *Opal.* 2, *Type.* 3, *Niece.* 4, *Adieu.* 5, *Actual.* 7, *On all fours.* 8, *Gold-digger.* 11, *Escape.* 13, *Burr.* 14, *Lawless.* 16, *Utility-man.* 17, *Buttonhole.* 20, *Etymon.* 23, *Oder.* 27, *Safari.* 30, *Treat.* 31, *Aroma.* 32, *Cast.* 33, *Star.*

A SPOT OF IRISH BLARNEY

a little snooze

by John D. Sheridan

PSYCHIATRISTS, when they prescribe relaxation as a cure for nervous tension, often advise their patients to "let go"; and to help them to form a mental picture of the result to be aimed at, remind them of how an infant or a kitten settles itself for sleep.

These are dainty images, suggesting grace and elegance, and therefore more suited to a three-guinea session than what is doubtless the most potent of all relaxation symbols—the Father Image on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

For during these blessed interludes, when the head of the house, worn out by his week's work and heavy with steak and kidney pie, gives up the struggle with reality and sinks into animal slumber, he attains a pitch of self-forgetfulness which a Yogi might envy.

There is nothing about him then to remind you of an infant or a kitten, and he has no more grace than a stranded whale, but for sheer relaxation he is in a class by himself.

He uncoils like a spring, his whole body goes flaccid, and he does not so much fall asleep as collapse into it.

And the secret of his success is

the complete absence of effort. He does not try to go to sleep, for sleep is the furthest thing from his mind. All he wants is to read the paper and have what he describes—in a way that suggests the like is rare in these parts—as "a little bit of peace and quiet."

He takes off his shoes and puts his feet up, wiggling his toes contentedly. He loosens his collar and his lower waistcoat buttons. Now he is ready to catch up on the news, and he takes up the paper and sighs luxuriously. But he finds it hard to focus on the print, and his thoughts haze as he reads, so he blinks manfully a few times and tries to concentrate. But all this amounts to an unpremeditated retreat from consciousness, for the great law of the mind is that fatigue follows effort.

He is in the grip of the most powerful of narcotics, and the affair is no longer under the control of the will.

His eyes close, his paper slips to the ground, and his lips part to make way for furred, slobbery sounds that cause no alarm to the family but might make a stranger run for the priest. He is now beyond the clutch of circumstance, but he can still be bothered by flies. He can't see or hear them, but when one lands on his face he moves his hands jerkily and utters guttural threats that have little relation to human speech.

As yet, however, he is barely submerged, for it will be a full minute before he sinks into the depths. And when he does, the flies are no longer a worry to him. He might wiggle a bit if someone tried to take out his appendix, but not at the first incision.

Presently, wife or child lifts the paper again and places it reverently across his face. This is a double charity. It keeps the flies off the sleeper, and it spares the family the sight of a loving parent who looks like a mental defective, has no neck to speak of, and is ripe for tonsillectomy.

The man of the house is now definitely asleep, but he can still serve the community.

You can set an ashtray on his lap, rummage in his coat pocket for matches, or take his pen or pencil from next to his heart. And you can still get money from him; but you can't take it from him. If you want a shilling for the bus, or money to pay the milkman, you must nudge him and shake him and call his name.

You won't waken him, of course, but you can goad him into a state of semi-consciousness in which he is capable of

putting his hand into his pocket—a reaction which, because of his station in life, is purely automatic. He grumbles unintelligibly, but this again is mere habit, and all it proves is that he is still alive.

After an interruption like this, he sinks more deeply into his chair, upsetting the paper as he goes, and takes up his snoring where he left off. Once again, all is peace. You can gauge the degree of relaxation he has attained by some simple test, such as setting the newspaper on his face again and his shoes on top of the paper. But you need not expect any vigorous reaction unless you do something really drastic—like breaking his leg.

There will be little changes in his breathing pattern at intervals, and short snatches of trumpet *obbligato*; and at times his breathing will seem to stop altogether. But this need not alarm you.

He is only practising relaxation, and after every pause he resumes his rhythmic pulsations. His near-strangulation sounds, however, take getting used to, and if you are not experienced in these matters you might easily mistake them for the death-rattle.

His return to consciousness, which is gradual and dramatic at once, is usually heralded by a tremendous sigh. After this he shudders in sections, yawns in a diminishing sequence, stretches his arms and legs, and gives his well-known rendering of a lion's roar—and all this without opening his eyes. Father, dear Father, is back with us now.

But he comes back in instalments, still trailing his clouds of glory. He blinks a few times, screws up his eyes to squeeze the sleep out of them, and rises ponderously to his feet. Then he flexes his arms once or twice, gives a last tremendous yawn, and says with the air of one admitting to a slight peccadillo which can no longer be denied; "I must have just fallen asleep."

This acute observation shows that the mighty brain is beginning to function once more. Richard is himself again, and it is time to put on the kettle for the tea.

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Coming in Argosy—more Irish blarney

by John D. Sheridan

PART ONE

THE THOUSAND DOORS

WARREN STONE awoke, the hair on his neck and arms bristling with the old sense of being stalked. Someone was in the room. He heard the carefully controlled breathing of someone hiding and frightened. As Stone slowly, carefully inched his hand towards the light cord on the bed table a hoarse voice whispered in heavily-accented English, "Be not afraid. Make not the lamp. There is cause. I bring you the thing from Master Karst, but someone follows."

The sound of the gun and the stifled whisper broke together. A weight fell across Stone's bed, a hand gripped his fingers and closed over them like a handshake—a tightening spasm, then lax. Before Stone could disengage his hand, he saw a shadow float from behind the *armoire*, then the silhouette against the French windows and the shivering curtains. He pulled his hand from the dead man's and threw himself out of bed at the shadow in the best tackle he could manage with so little leverage.

The pain went burning through his head and Stone thought he had missed and butted the bureau, but as he fell he saw the

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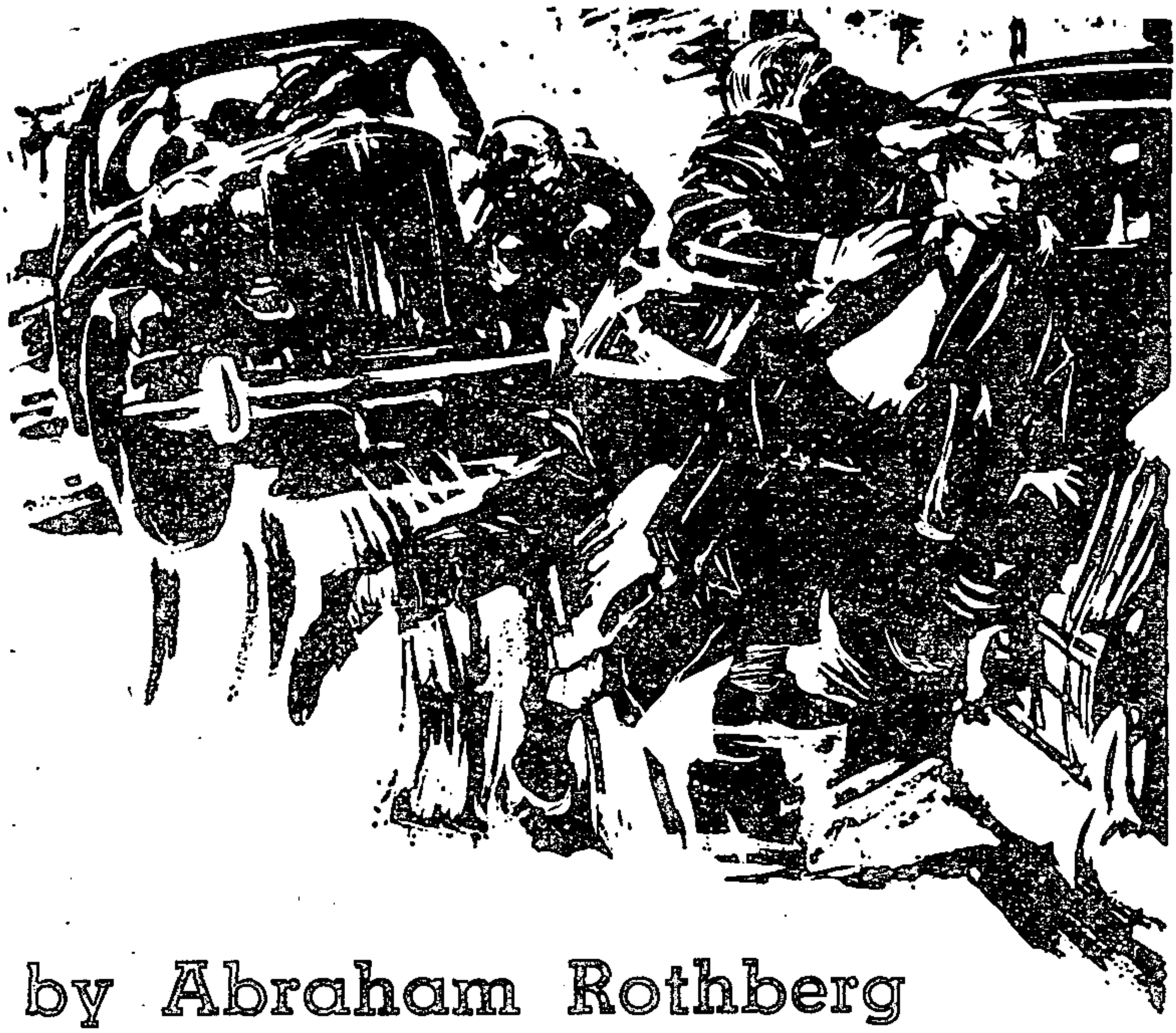

by Abraham Rothberg

gun and realised that the shadow had side-stepped and clubbed him. The room spun, over him a black totem-pole with hideous faces wavered, then danced through the French windows, and flowed over the wrought-iron balcony railing. Just as the sickness lurching in his stomach, and the plunging roller-coaster behind his eyes crashed together in the back of his head, he saw sheet-white hands with hair like black grass across the fingers holding on to the balcony handrail. Then they too fell from sight, and Stone passed out.

When he came to, he was sprawled on the floor, his head beating like his heart, and the police were there. Two stood over him, tall, almost identical men, in drab green sloppy uniforms, their expressionless moustached faces looking down at him. When they saw him looking up, one of them nudged his side with a heavy boot, and instinctively Stone, who had just begun to feel his fear mingle with the sour taste in his mouth, shoved the leg back. It rose to stomp him. Quickly, angrily, Stone grabbed the leg and slammed the man to the floor. By the time Stone was on his feet again, dizzy and

wobbling, the other policeman had a gun in his belly, and the one he had thrown was on one knee, a bayonet half-unsheathed.

There was a sharp flurry of speech and for the first time Stone saw a small man in the armchair—watching. His legs were crossed, and his blue raincoated arms neatly folded on his chest. "We could have you killed for resisting arrest," he said in very British English.

"Arrest?" Stone asked dully, still unable to focus his eyes enough to see the man's face. "What for?"

The slight tilt of the man's head was almost imperceptible, but the light from the overhead chandelier on his glasses made them glint. Stone turned and saw the body, half on his bed, half-kneeling, looking as if the man had been killed at prayer. Dressed in brown homespun edged with black embroidery, he wore trousers that bloused at the thighs, then tightened around the calves into dirty white knitted heavy stockings which were held in place by leather thongs. His shoes were the moccasions with turned-up toes that only the day before Stone had learned were called *opankes*. Again the glasses flashed, and one of the policemen—the same one who had tried to stomp him—kicked the body over with his boot, his eyes fastened on Stone.

The brown homespun forage hat fell off the dead face of a boy no more than sixteen years old. Fair-skinned, almost beardless, with thick curling black hair framing it, the face lay there, black eyes staring up at the ornate cut-glass chandelier. Stone felt weak, sick, and he held his head up with both hands, afraid that if he didn't it might fall off, roll down his chest and land at his feet. How did I get into this? he thought.

A clipped British accent asked, "Who is he?"

Stone turned and stared at the man, again noticing the strange glitter and shape of his glasses, and that he wore a blue raincoat not a uniform. Unable to speak, Stone shrugged.

"The boy's name was Antun Vuk, Mister Stone."

Before Stone could ask how he knew the name, either name, the man with the eyeglasses rose and gave swift orders to the two policemen. They tore the bloodstained blankets and sheets off the bed, rolled Antun Vuk's body in them, and then carried it like a sack of meal through the door.

"And now, Mister Stone," the man asked, "what are you doing in Yugoslavia?"

Stone walked to the windows and stood there, looking out of the still open French windows into the park. What had happened to that totem-pole shadow? Stone strained his eyes

to see something, but there were only the formal walks of the hotel garden. Was there such a man? Stone turned, saw the bloodstained mattress cover, and felt his hands trembling.

"Perhaps you had better put on your dressing-gown, Mister Stone, and your slippers," the Eyeglasses said considerately. "It is a chilly night."

Automatically Stone obeyed, put on his dressing-gown, and looked for his bedroom slippers but, like his cigarettes, he couldn't find those either.

"Your feet are bare, Mister Stone."

"Yes, yes, I know, but I'm fine now. Warm."

"You were going to tell me what you are doing here," the man persisted.

Stone tried to pull himself together. This was his world, his century, when killing was a speciality on a mass-production basis. Why be so upset by another dead sixteen-year-old boy? But such hard-boiled thinking was not his own, only the ill-fitting adopted attitudes he had learned during the war and at a hundred fights, sports events and moving pictures. What he wanted was for this man to go away, for the whole thing to go away, so he could crawl back into bed, pull the covers over his head and pretend in the morning that nothing had happened, that it was all a bad dream. But there weren't any covers left on the bed; the two policemen had taken them for the corpse, using them like an old hammock, and the little man was still there, his eyeglasses like tiny mirrors turned on him. Besides, Stone asked himself, what *was* he doing there anyway?

"I'm a literary agent," Stone said.

"What kind of agent?" the Eyeglasses asked sharply, bearing down heavily on the word *agent*.

"No, not that kind of agent," Stone said. Stupid of me, he thought. I should have had more sense. "I'm an *author's representative*," he went on. "Someone who sells writers' books to publishing houses and conducts their business."

"I see," he said, after a pause, not quite convinced. "At least that explains your passport."

"Now what the hell are you doing with my passport?" Stone asked angrily.

"We wanted to know who you were when we found the boy," the man said, unperturbed, "and the hotel management obliged us."

Stone realised that he had better control his temper. If he lost his head he was going to be in deeper trouble.

From his pockets the man also took Stone's wallet, address

book, and his various identification papers. He spread them out on the small table in front of his chair. "We also examined these while you were unconscious."

Slowly, he extracted a card from a small black leather card case. "My card," he said, proffering it between two outstretched fingers, a sardonic smirk glued to his face.

Stone took the card. It was expensive heavy paper and in the centre was embossed in flowing script the name, *Dr. Petar Decani.* At the lower left side was an address and telephone number. There was nothing more to identify him.

"You're from the police, Doctor Decani?"

Decani nodded.

"But you wear no uniform?"

"You might say I am an inspector—a detective."

"I see," Stone said. But he didn't see, at all. "Are you a medical doctor too?"

"No," Decani said, impatiently stubbing out his cigarette. "As you may or may not know—" he grinned, and looked suddenly much younger, in his early forties, a contemporary, Stone thought—"everyone east of Vienna who is a graduate of a university is a doctor of some kind. I'm a doctor of law."

"Of law," Stone echoed, feeling stupid.

"Of law," Decani repeated, the same sardonic expression there and gone on his face.

Decani got up and walked past him. As he did so, Stone saw that he was not actually short; in fact, he was at least six feet tall, almost as tall as Stone himself. The man's leanness and effortless loping walk were deceptive. Decani fanned the passport and papers out on the night table as if he were spreading a hand of cards, then picked up the phone. He waited, then began to speak rapidly. When he was done, he turned and asked, "You came here straight from Germany?"

"Yes, I drove from Frankfurt."

"Frankfurt?"

"Yes, I was there at the *Buchmesse*, the annual book fair, the publishers' conference. I go every year, or at least one of us goes, my partner or myself."

"What do you do there?"

"The usual things. Talk to writers, publishers and other agents. Try to sell translations of our writers, and perhaps arrange to represent some European authors."

"Business," Decani said, making the word an epithet.

"You might call it that," Stone said. "What's wrong with that? In fact, that's what I came here for."

"To this country?"

"Yes, to see if I could find some books, speak to some of your writers and represent them in America."

"Did you have anyone particular in mind?" Decani asked, his voice so deliberately casual that Stone knew he was on sensitive ground.

"I don't know much about your writers or literature, but people in Frankfurt mentioned that there were many I ought to talk to," he replied carefully. "Here, let me see." Stone picked up his notebook from the table where Decani had laid it down, riffled the pages and then read, "Stefan Zica, Andrija Gora, Konstantin Karst, Gavrilo Iovanovic..." he broke off and looked up. "There are a good many other names, but I was told I could ask at the Writers' Association, the State Publishing House, and the Foreign Ministry, and that they would arrange for me to meet whomever I wanted."

Decani seemed not to have heard. "The people who gave you those names were Germans?"

"Some," Stone answered, "not all. An Austrian, several Frenchmen, a couple of Italians, some Englishmen. Why?"

"And they said Konstantin Karst?"

Because Stone remembered all too clearly Antun Vuk's whispered, "*I bring you the thing from Master Karst,*" Stone forced himself to scan the notebook again, glad to see that his hands did not tremble as his finger ran down the column of names. "Karst? Karst. Yes, here it is. Konstantin Karst."

"They told you to see him especially?"

"No. His was just one of the names mentioned."

"He hasn't written any books for years," Decani said, "since before the war, before he was Vice-President."

"Is he Vice-President?" Stone asked.

"I said *was* Vice-President." Decani spoke too softly. "He retired last year...for reasons of ill-health. I do not think you will be able to see him."

"That's too bad. I was told he was a very gifted writer."

"Yes," Decani affirmed, "Karst is a *very* gifted man."

The silence that followed was broken by a knock at the door. At Decani's word, the night porter and a middle-aged, tired-looking chambermaid came in carrying bed linen and blankets. They did not look directly at him, yet seemed to see Decani's nod and glinting glasses, which set them to remaking the bed. By his silence, Decani indicated there was to be no further conversation until they left, and Stone was grateful for the chance to compose himself.

Certainly, Decani was suspicious—these people were professionally suspicious. They had been cut off from Stone's world too long, immersed in their Balkan world of battling and hating nationalities, of national wars, civil wars, of spies, murder and violence. If they couldn't persuade you, you were a prisoner, a pariah, or a corpse. The viewpoint wasn't unique to them, Stone thought bitterly. The age of anxiety, they'd called it, but the age of murder was what it was. Well, to hell with it. He didn't care what they were, so long as they let him alone. It was no business of his. He had no part in it, and wanted none.

In spite of Antun Vuk? his own voice questioned him silently. *In spite of Antun Vuk*, he answered himself firmly. What is he to me that I should weep for him? He was pleased with the Shakespearean echo, then disgusted with himself for playing with words in the face of a boy's death . . . He was a bookman, a literary agent. As Valerie had put it so contemptuously: "I married a bookman." Well, at least she was no longer his wife, and hadn't to put up with his bookishness.

The porter and chambermaid worked swiftly. After they had stripped off the mattress cover, baring the last much smaller bloodstain beneath, they covered it over with fresh white sheets, and in a few moments, for all you could see, Antun Vuk might never have died there. In the making, they moved the bed, exposing his slippers and cigarettes underneath. Stone pulled them out of the way, gratefully stuffed his cold feet into the slippers and the cigarette pack into his pocket. But the right slipper did not give to his foot, and only after his second impatient shove did Stone realise something was wedged into the toe. Unobtrusively, he tried to identify it by wiggling his big toe around it, but he could not.

The chambermaid kept rubbing her eyes and the porter's cheek jumped like a frog's eyelid, but they were soon finished; bowing and curtsying briefly, they went towards the door. As they were closing it behind them, one of the chambermaid's eyes blinked shut, solemnly and only once, like a silent camera shutter. That and the thing wedged against his toe startled Stone, and Decani's barked order right after made him jump. The door opened again and the porter and chambermaid came back. Stone wondered if Decani could have seen that wink when his back was facing the door. Suddenly, Stone knew why the eyeglasses looked so strange and glinted so often and oddly: they had small side panels so that out of the

corners of his eyes Decani could see behind him, and he had been watching the porter and chambermaid.

Decani's words were a slow icy stream. The chambermaid's face grew grim. She shook her head but said nothing. Decani spoke again, his sentence ending on a high note of questioning. Then, whirling, in one motion, he brought his heel down sharply on her foot. The woman's scream was high-pitched and wild as she lurched and fell over, and Stone was sure that Decani had broken half a dozen small bones in her foot. Stone remembered being taught how to do it, *on the small bones of the instep with your heel*... He thought of moving to pick the chambermaid up, but Decani said harshly, "You will not interfere, Mister Stone."

Decani nodded, glasses glinting, and the porter leaned down, got his arm around the woman, and helped her limp out.

Decani took off his glasses, revealing ocean-green eyes whose chill somehow made his face more human and vulnerable. For an instant, he closed his eyes, pressing thumb and forefinger against the beating veins in the blue hollows where his eyes met the sides of his nose. Then, wearily, he dropped his hand away. "You don't know our people. They are savage. Proud, primitive, *you* might call them... The only law and order they understand is violent punishment: swift, severe."

"Even when they're innocent?" Stone asked.

"Innocent?" Decani's eyes narrowed, his voice grew softer, silkier. "No-one, Mister Stone, is innocent. Everyone wants to do what he wants to do. If that were permitted, no society would be stable. There would be no law, no order, no progress, no safety. Only chaos."

He put his glasses on again, and rose.

"You will, Mister Stone, please come to see me tomorrow at the address on my card. We shall try to clear all this up. *At two-thirty in the afternoon. Is it agreeable?*"

"It won't be agreeable," Stone said, trying to smile, and also standing, "but I'll be there."

Doctor Decani's head bent in what might have been either a nod or a bow. "You are a strange man, Mister Stone," he said. "A strange *literary agent*—" the accent was now equal on both words—"I think you called it. Goodnight. I hope you sleep well."

"Goodnight, Doctor Decani."

The door closed, and Stone turned the key in the lock, threw the bolt, and put his forehead against the door until his stomach stopped churning. After a time, he walked back

to the bed and slumped down on it. He took off his right slipper, put his hand into the toe and withdrew a small piece of wadded material, the kind of nondescript dirty grey stuff easy to hide, easy to discard, easy to overlook—it could almost have been a large wad of accumulated dust. Stone shook it gingerly, with two fingers, and a square of paper fell to the floor. He picked it up, unfolded it, and smoothed it out on the table. On it, in very old-fashioned handwriting, he read:

My dear Mister Stone,

Friends of mine in your country have written telling me of you and that you would be coming to my country. I am taking this strange way of inviting you to come to see me, but it is necessary. I think we shall have much in common that will be profitable to us both.

It would be best if you could arrange to visit me through official government channels, but if you think that will not come to pass, we must look for other ways. The bearer is completely trustworthy. Tell him a café or some other public place that you will go to where we can meet, so to speak, by accident.

Tell no-one about this note. Lives are at stake if you do. Put nothing down on paper. *And destroy this.* I apologise for this roundabout and clandestine invitation, but it will be a pleasure to meet you.

Konstantin Karst

Tell the bearer: *Antun Vuk.* No-one would tell Antun Vuk anything any more. Being completely trustworthy had, as usual, paid badly. It's not my business, he told himself, not my responsibility. I didn't ask Karst to send the boy, nor even ask to see Karst. But Stone couldn't root out the recollection, and as he tried, the sharp image of his wife's hard, half-turned beautiful face flowered in his mind, and Valerie's voice was telling him again about her lover.

"Why, Warren? You think that you survived that war, but you're wrong. You're half dead already, Warren."

Stone stood up and went to the windows, hoping with movement to shake loose the memory of Valerie. In the garden below shadows still moved, and Stone felt his own shadows stirring inside him. Why should he be thinking of Valerie? He hadn't thought of her for some time, at least not during the days . . .

His partner, Sam Gordon, had always detested Valerie. And Valerie had hated Gordon in return, always trying to dissolve their partnership.

After the divorce, Sam had insisted that this year Stone would have to go to the Frankfurt *Buchmesse* because Sam couldn't: he was in the midst of negotiating a couple of important and sticky contracts, and since he was the firm's lawyer . . . Besides, though business was good and growing, they were getting too parochial. They could use a couple of good European writers to fill out their list. Had Stone ever been to Yugoslavia? The country was particularly interesting now, and they had a good crop of postwar writers. Though Stone had not mentioned it to Decani, it was then, for the first time, that he had heard Konstantin Karst's name.

Stone went to the bathroom, got a glass, and then went to his suitcase for a whisky bottle. He poured himself half the glass, took a big swallow, then sat down on the bed and carefully reread Konstantin Karst's note. *Friends of mine,* he had written. Who? Which ones? Who knew of Stone's trip anyway? Well, publishing was a small gossipy business.

Sitting there, puzzling, Stone drank the rest of the whisky. Things would be clearer in the morning. Tomorrow, first thing, before he went to see Decani, he would go to the Embassy and get it all straightened out in the light of day. For a moment, he thought of keeping the note from Karst to show to the Embassy people, otherwise they might think he was imagining the whole thing. But he decided against it. Antun Vuk had died to deliver and hide that message, and Karst had instructed him to destroy it.

Stone laid the note in a hotel ashtray and put a lighted match to it. He watched the note burn down, and carefully stirred the ashes before carrying the ashtray to the window to blow them into the night. Then, gratefully, he got into bed. As he lay there, waiting for the sleep that was so long in coming, Stone remembered with pleasure how he had lunged for the totem-pole shadow and slammed the policeman to the floor, his body moving of its own mindless muscular accord, as it used to before and during the war. Even as sleep came, Stone knew that he had not been quite awake, not thinking, or he would have performed neither act—perhaps could not—and he remembered with shame the way he had let Decani stop him from helping the chambermaid, because by then he *was* awake. He liked to think that the years had taught him to curb his violent temper and his swift resort to unthinking

aggressive action. *He had learned to keep his head.* But keeping your head meant two separate and distinct things.

The Embassy flew the American flag and had the great Seal of State over the entryway. Immense heavily-barred glass doors at least twenty feet high reminded Stone of a portcullis, and inside the light was dim and grey. There was something Balkan about the atmosphere inside the building, as if it had taken on the colouration of the country. For a few moments the sight of familiar newspapers on the racks made him feel comfortable, but the receptionist instantly restored the Balkan tone. "The Ambassador is in Washington for consultations," she said in answer to Stone's request to see him. Her accent indicated she was Yugoslav by origin.

"Then I'd like to see the First Secretary," Stone persisted.

The receptionist bent her head and looked over his card again. "You are a *literary* agent, Mister Stone?" she said, searching his face with her dark eyes.

Stone nodded.

"Then maybe you would like to see Mister Michael Townsend, the cultural attaché. I'll see if he is free." She turned to a small black portable switchboard on her desk. "Second door on your left, fourth floor," she told Stone.

The cultural attaché was smooth and even colder. A tall slender man in his thirties, his face came to a harsh point in an almost razor-edged nose. He was wearing an English grey tweed suit, heavy Scotch brogues, black knit tie and button-down white shirt. With that uniform went the brisk uniform manner. "So you're Warren Stone," he said, shaking hands with a clammy palm. "I'm Michael Townsend, Second Secretary in charge of cultural affairs. We heard you were going to pay us a visit."

"You did?" Stone asked. "How?"

"Oh, you know, that kind of thing gets around." Townsend's thin mouth bared white, even teeth but it was a smile that did not engage the flat grey eyes. "And now what can I do for you, Mr. Stone?"

Before he could answer, Townsend went to a huge half wall of black knobs and panel that looked like a short-wave radio transmitter and receiver and turned it on, holding up his hand for silence like an announcer about to begin a broadcast. When the music began—Strauss waltzes of all things—he nodded permission to speak. Swiftly, briefly, looking straight into those grey pebble eyes, Stone told Townsend what had

happened the night before, leaving out only the boy's whispered message and the note from Karst. Townsend's face did not change expression. He seemed rapt: only when Stone was through did he realise that Townsend had not asked him to sit.

Townsend's eyes were now riveted on the intricate design of the oriental rug beneath their feet. "And then you came here?" he asked.

"Where else could I go?" Stone replied, beginning to feel his temper rise.

"Of course, of course," Townsend said soothingly, his lips going through the motions of what passed for a smile. Then, as if seeing him for the first time, the attaché asked him to sit down, pointing to a leather chair.

"Would you excuse me for a moment?" Townsend said.

Stone waited, smoking and staring at a neatly-framed formal photograph of the President which hung over the desk. Townsend had heard he was coming to pay a visit? How? Gordon and Stone was a fairly well-known agency in the publishing world, but nowhere else, and he himself was scarcely legendary. When Stone had applied for his passport, he hadn't given Yugoslavia as a destination at all, because he wasn't sure then that he'd go there. He'd applied for a visa in Frankfurt at the Yugoslav consulate, but had not told the American consul.

Townsend returned with a man who might almost have been deliberately designed to be his exact opposite—a squat, powerful, almost square man in his mid-forties whose white hair was cropped so close that his scalp showed through. The florid face and broken veins in the cheeks and nose bespoke the heavy drinker. An old slovenly navy blue suit, creased, stained and spotted with food, dandruff and cigarette ash hung loosely on him, and the man looked as if he had been sleeping in those same clothes for a month.

"This is our economic counsellor—" Townsend introduced him—"Maxim Grout."

Grout nodded, but did not offer to shake hands. When he spoke, it was in a heavy bass rumble and though his English was flawless, there was something remotely off-key in his intonation that made Stone certain he was not American born.

"I'd like to hear your story once more, Mr. Stone," Grout said, "that is, if you can bear to repeat it." Stone again told what had happened the night before, again leaving out Antun Vuk's words and Karst's note. When he had finished, Grout asked, "You are sure that the boy's name was Antun Vuk?"

He spoke the name very slowly and distinctly. Stone nodded.

"And you came directly here?"

"First thing this morning."

"Just what did you expect us to do?" Grout asked.

Stone bounded to his feet. "This *is* the American Embassy, isn't it? And you are supposed to represent American citizens and their interests in this country, or have I misunderstood what the job of an Embassy abroad is?"

Stone saw their quickly-exchanged glances. "I want you to help me get this mess cleared up so I can get on with what I came here for."

"What did you come here for, Mr. Stone?" Townsend asked, his grey eyes darkening into small ball-bearings in his face. Both he and Grout seemed almost crouched in anticipation of what he would say.

Slowly, controlling himself, Stone said, "I'm an author's agent. I never heard of Antun Vuk, and I didn't kill him. I thought someone from the American Embassy, *my* Embassy, might come to see Doctor Decani with me to get this whole mess straight since I am not eager to spend my time here in jail for a crime I didn't commit. Is that clear?"

"Have any criminal charges been placed?" Grout asked.

"I don't know," Stone said, "it only happened last night."

"Did you have any particular writers in mind you came to see?" Townsend asked. The note was too casual.

Deliberately Stone took out his notebook, though by now he knew every one of the two dozen or so names by heart, and read the list aloud to them. When he got to Konstantin Karst, speaking the name completely without emphasis, as he had the others, he heard their sharp intake of breath, but they did not interrupt and he continued reading the list through. "I also meant to come in to talk to you," he added, "to find out whom else I ought to see."

"I think I might be able to help you to see some of those people," Townsend said, suddenly and unaccountably.

"Perhaps I ought to forget the whole thing," Stone retorted, "and pack my bags—get the first plane out of here."

Disdain and anxiety seemed to clash in Townsend's face, but Grout remained impassive. "If they don't want you to leave, Mr. Stone," he said, "you couldn't even get out of your hotel lobby. And if there are criminal charges against you, there isn't too much we can do." He pulled an old hand-carved cherrywood pipe from his pocket, then a small oilskin tobacco pouch, and began to fill the bowl. "But," he went

on, the pipe between his teeth, "maybe that is exactly what they hoped last night would accomplish. Maybe they wanted to scare you off."

"Well, if that's what *they* wanted to do, *they* damn well succeeded," Stone snorted. Then, turning to Maxim Grout, he said, "*They, they*, who are *they*? And what have *they* got to do with me?"

Grout looked at him sternly. "You are right to be afraid, Mr. Stone, but you must not lose your head."

Again that phrase, Stone thought. That's exactly what I'm trying to prevent, losing my head, and the simplest way to prevent it would be to get the very first plane out.

Grout had his pipe lit and a column of smoke pouring out of it. "Have you ever heard of Konstantin Karst?"

"Yes," Stone answered, feeling guilty about not having mentioned Karst's note. "He's one of the names on my list."

"Is that all you know about him?"

"No." Stone hesitated. "Decani mentioned that Karst was once Vice-President of this country but that he'd retired because of ill-health and that I probably wouldn't be able to see him."

"Is that what Decani said?" Townsend asked, leaning forward, his long sharp face like a hunting dog's. "Exactly what he said?"

"As close as I can remember."

"In the Balkans, Konstantin Karst is a legend," Maxim Grout said dreamily.

"Mr. Stone," Townsend cut Grout off, "could I see your passport, please?"

"You said you knew I was arriving, but you want to see my passport?" Stone asked. This was more than initial caution; it was suspicion and unfriendliness.

"We were informed that someone named Warren Stone was coming to Belgrade," Grout said, "but how do we know you're Warren Stone?"

"The passport, please, Mr. Stone," Townsend said.

Slowly Stone removed the passport from the black morocco leather wallet and handed it to him. "Do you think that if I weren't Stone I'd be so stupid as to come here?"

Townsend did not reply but began to examine the passport closely. Grout watched him attentively.

"Do you live in New York?" Townsend asked. Stone noticed that he had been jotting notes on a little pad.

"The passport says so, doesn't it?" Stone replied.

Townsend finished scrutinizing the passport and gave it to Grout who looked at it for a moment before asking, as he handed it back, "What did you do during the war?"

"I was in the paratroops," Stone said curtly.

"Not in OSS or Intelligence?" Townsend said.

"Or in the State Department?" Grout echoed.

"I was in the Eighty-second Airborne."

"Have you been in Washington recently?"

Stone nodded. "I was there about six weeks ago."

"For what?"

"What I did in Washington is really none of your business. If you must know, I was talking to a senator about doing a book on American foreign policy . . . Is all this necessary?"

They exchanged glances once more, and suddenly Stone realised that they, too, thought he was some kind of agent. Probably they imagined he was sent on a mission to Karst that they should have been asked to do themselves, and that he was in Belgrade by-passing them.

"And what's all this about Karst anyway?"

"Konstantin Karst is that peculiarly European combination," Grout replied, "the poet and politician, the man of action and the man of contemplation. A tradition from which our own intellectuals could very well learn and profit." He puffed his pipe meditatively for a while. There was a feeling and intelligent man under the tough face and square bulk of Maxim Grout.

"Karst was brought up in the harsh mountain world of Montenegro. He has always had many of the mountain man's qualities: lyricism and violence, sentimentality and ruthlessness. But most of all—hardheaded fanaticism. When he chooses a course, whichever one it is, it is likely to be an extreme, and he is sure to push it to its logical—or illogical—conclusion.

"When such men drink, they always get drunk. Karst drank, but what he drank was more fiery than even the local *rakija.* He drank Revolution, with a capital R, in this instance labelled Marxism-Leninism, and he became as drunk with that as most men become with whisky. Drunker. Because he was more sensitive and volatile, he became even drunker."

Townsend's voice was dry. "Konstantin Karst was born just before the First World War, which would make him somewhere in his early fifties now—"

"—so that most of what he knew as he grew up was war and depression, depression and war," Grout said.

"You've never met Karst, or been in communication with him?" Townsend inquired abruptly.

"No. I never met him or wrote to him," Stone replied, aware of the hairline he was drawing between telling the truth and lying.

"Well, let's find out what it's all about," Grout said, going to the phone.

A few moments later he was saying, "Doctor Decani?" and then lapsing into Serbo-Croat. He hung up, then he said, "Come on, we're going to pay Doctor Decani a visit, *now*."

"He said this afternoon," Stone protested.

"He'll see us now," Grout said, with grim satisfaction.

Outside, daylight had settled into a gloomy, dim-grey morning. A heavy wintry mist muffled sounds like snow. They passed foreign embassies and government offices, each identifiable by its polished brass plaque and its own small green-pointed wooden sentryboxes, with armed sentries on guard.

Everywhere there were automobiles parked on the broad, half-unmade, half-concrete pavement. Row after row, side by side, except where tree trunks intervened, the cars were so numerous and so closely parked that they made it difficult to walk, and Stone and Grout were forced off the pavement. Most of the cars were heavy, sleek black Mercedes-Benz 220s.

"Belgrade's Embassy Row and Government Alley," Grout grunted sardonically. "None of them walks, if he can help it—those Mercedes are the new ruling-class status symbol here—they don't leave anyone else room to walk either. Watch your step."

As Stone glanced down, he heard the sounds—the screech of tyres, the racing engine, and Grout's booming, "Move, Stone! Run!" He saw the black heavy car bearing down on them, its chrome grille-work and headlights like some animal's gaping mouth and glaring eyes. A lone man in the driver's seat was hunched over the wheel, coat collar turned up and hat brim turned down, so that all Stone noted was a white line of nose in the shadows between the two, a nose that looked more like naked bone than flesh. At the same time, out of the corner of his eye, he saw Grout's square body move with unbelievable agility and speed, knocking them both to the ground and rolling them over on the pavement between two parked cars.

When Stone got to his feet the car was gone. Grout, on one knee, was already peering at the wet cobblestones in the

street. Stone joined him, feeling dry-mouthed and knee-shaky. Grout was saying clinically, "Up to their old tricks. Even using an old-style Tatra with Venetian blinds down and no plates." Grout stood up. "It's plain that they really don't want to have you see Konstantin Karst."

"Looks like they don't want to see anything," Stone said, disliking the fear and self-pity he heard in his voice.

"They didn't want to hit you—or us—only scare you. Here, look at that," he pointed to the tyre marks on the cobblestones. "That driver braked a long way before we jumped... If they wanted to kill, Mr. Stone," Grout grinned crookedly, "a couple of bullets would have done the trick from that close. No, they wanted to frighten you off."

"How can you be so sure it's Karst they want to frighten me away from?" Stone asked slowly, "and not some other writer?"

Grout's face was suddenly melancholy. "Come along," he said, taking Stone's arm. "Decani's waiting."

Stone shook off his hand and repeated the question.

"How can I be sure?" Grout asked. "I can't. There's only one clue, but it's a difficult one to ignore: *Antun Vuk.*"

The boy's name brought back the blood and the turned-up *opankes.* "Antun Vuk?" Stone repeated dully.

"Antun Vuk," Grout said very softly, "was Konstantin Karst's nephew, his sister's son."

"Oh, no!"

Grout nodded. "And I know he loved the boy. The boy's mother and father were killed during the war."

"The fool! Why did he send a boy to do a man's job!"

"He must want to see you very badly, and he must think it's very important." Grout began to take his pipe things out and prepare a smoke. In spite of his deliberate manner and gestures, Stone saw that Grout was badly shaken.

"Karst was a Communist body and soul, you know. He was elected to the Central Committee: always a ruthless and dogmatic activist, with power, he became in fact worse. Everyone had to toe the Party line or else.

"Then the war came, and Karst was a Partisan commander, brave and resourceful, but merciless. After the war, Karst was everywhere, Ambassador, Minister, and finally Vice-President. When the break with the Russians came in '48, Karst got the job of defending the country and attacking the Russians."

Grout puffed the pipe vigorously. "The more Karst

attacked them, the more he saw he was attacking a mirror-image of the society he had helped to establish in his own country. And once the rose-coloured glasses were off, Karst turned on that society, on his friends, former comrades, on what he himself had been.

"Karst hit his comrades where it hurt—in the centre of their power and their privilege—and they cut him down to size. They took away his jobs, his villas, his cars; they even took away his wartime decorations.

"There was almost no-one left to defend him," Grout added harshly. "The so-called liberals and deviationists he'd stepped on never forgave him. The pro-Russians remembered his assault on the Soviet Party. His friends in power, now the targets of his criticism, looked on him as a traitor. He was isolated, without friends, money or a job: absolutely alone."

"And Karst's books, his writing?" Stone asked, hearing as he did so, Valerie's laughter in his ears; what he knew would be her cutting comment, "That's what *you* would ask about! History being made. A man's life and career going under. And *you* ask about books."

"Nothing but polemics, political propaganda. Fiery, illogical, sometimes beautiful," Grout replied, his face downcast, "but no poetry, no novels."

It was so quiet Stone could hear their breathing, and the splayed sounds their soles made on the street. They walked several blocks before Stone brought himself to ask, "Why didn't you tell me about Antun Vuk before?"

"I thought it better for you not to know, especially with Decani."

"But I knew."

"You knew!" It was Grout's turn to be surprised. "You knew the boy was Karst's nephew?"

"No, not that." Stone told him the whole story then, but he felt guilty for betraying the confidence assumed in Karst's note. When Stone finished, Grout's expression was rigid. "You should have told us that before," he said.

"And you should have told me who Antun Vuk was, but you didn't, did you?" Stone retorted sharply.

Grout's face gradually relaxed into a smile. "No, we didn't, did we? I guess we're even." He put out his hand.

As he took the hand and shook it, Stone said slowly and very distinctly, "I haven't forgotten what you did back there, and I'm grateful."

They stood there grinning at each other, relieved, almost

happy, their hands still gripped. "My name is Maxim, but no-one ever calls me anything but Max," Grout said.

"Mine's Warren," said Stone.

Embarrassed, they laughed awkwardly and walked on, measuring their steps in stride. "I wonder how they knew where we were?" Stone said, deliberately casual.

"Not hard to figure out," Grout replied. "Decani knew we were on the way there. Only a couple of routes from the Embassy to his office, and this is the most direct and likely." But he was obviously thinking of something else. "That's why I don't think they wanted to kill. Not smart. Daylight. They'd have waited for night and not when we had an appointment to see one of their people."

"One of whose people?"

"Decani's.. The political police. Secret police. They stay out of the limelight these days and they don't throw their weight around any more the way they once did."

"Only one thing makes sense, ties the pieces together," Stone said finally, almost to himself. "Since his fall from the high places, or maybe even while he was up there, Karst was still writing. If his politics changed as radically as you said they had, then he's probably written a book his high and mighty former friends won't like. His former friends, no doubt, suspect that, but haven't been willing or able to do anything about it. I have no special qualifications that would make a man like Karst want to see me, except that I happen to be an American literary agent. Therefore, the only reason he could want to see me is a book."

"No other *special* qualifications, Warren?" Grout regarded him quizzically. "You're sure you weren't sent here *specifically* to see Karst?"

"So help me, Max, I'm a *literary agent*, nothing more. As you could see back there with the Tatra, I'm not much good for this kind of thing."

"You'd be good enough," Grout said, looking levelly at him, "if you cared. The trouble is you don't give a damn."

"About politics? No, no more. The war cured me."

"*Cured* you?"

"Yes, cured me. I don't hunt. I don't fish. I don't kill . . . any more."

"Even if they are willing to kill . . . or are *not* willing to let you alone, what then?"

"You mean Antun Vuk?"

Grout nodded. "That's the one part of the picture that

doesn't make sense. Decani's men wouldn't have killed the boy."

"Why not?" Stone asked, remembering Decani's cold violence, and the skilled careless way the boy's body had been disposed of by his men.

"They don't kill these days unless it's absolutely necessary, and killing that boy wasn't necessary."

Decani's offices were housed in a huge cream-coloured building close to the centre of the city. The vast hall was dimly lit with weak yellow lamps that cast startling shadows on the high ceilings and walls. Great wooden doors guarded the various entryways, but all were closed off except one small door on the far left through which two lines of waiting people stretched past a small glass-enclosed cubicle.

Stone followed Grout and they joined the waiting line. In the glass cage two men sat, a sten gun on the wall behind them.

Grout spoke to the man seated at the desk inside the glass cubicle. Behind him, standing next to the sten gun was a tall, terribly thin man with a face like a tomahawk. A heavy black moustache and a livid scar slashed diagonally across the bridge of his nose, from his right cheek to the left side of his forehead, made his face seem as if it had been going in two directions at once and had only just been held together. His left hand nervously ran up and down the sten gun barrel. For an instant his eyes met Stone's, and Stone was sure of a flash of recognition. When he continued to stare, the other man deliberately and icily turned his eyes away, but there was a sardonic hint of a smile in the turned-up corners of the moustache, and his hand stayed on the gun barrel.

"Damn foolishness," Grout grumbled. "Wrong entrance. We have to go round to the right."

Stone kept staring at the man, examining his face and wanting him to know it. Wave after wave of hot anger burnt through him, and Stone felt his muscles tense, as if he were an animal readying itself for a spring. He was absurdly gratified to see the man's eyes carefully watching him too, and the man's growing tension. His hand dropped away from the sten gun, and he kept running a finger between his neck and the turtle-necked black sweater he wore under his shabby double-breasted jacket.

As they walked away from the line Stone ground out the words, "Don't turn now. But the man back there, next to the sten gun."

Grout halted, and in a leisurely manner began to relight his pipe. As he struck the flame, he looked over the pipe bowl towards the cubicle. "I see him," he said softly. "What's the matter, Warren? You're white as a sheet, and your eyes are blazing."

"I think that's the totem-pole type who killed Antun Vuk."

Stone felt more than saw Grout's agitation, but the voice asked quietly and calmly, "Are you sure?"

"No. The room was pretty dark. But he's not exactly a run-of-the-mill size and shape."

"Remember him," Grout advised, snatching another quick look at the man. "I will too." Then, taking his arm, Grout said, "Come on, let's go see the good Doctor."

The right entrance for them turned out to be at the far corner of the same building, but obviously set up for guests.

They were ushered into a large waiting room tastefully, if elaborately, furnished in Empire style. A male secretary tried to tell them in sign language to be seated, that Doctor Decani would be with them shortly.

"The usual technique," Grout said under his breath, "is a good long wait, but today we'll be let in quickly."

The words were scarcely out of Grout's mouth when the buzzer on the secretary's desk sounded. Painfully, in stammered English, he said to them, "Please to go in."

The doors on the right led to Decani's office. When they opened them, another set of heavy doors padded with grey leather neatly fastened with a rectangle of thick brass studs faced them. The soundproofing and what it connoted made Stone hesitate a moment before that set of doors.

The contrast between the room they had just left and the one they had entered left Stone feeling he'd been elbowed in the solar plexus, and he realised it was intended to do just that. As stripped-down as a military office or a cabin on a destroyer, the room was painted just a shade lighter than battleship grey and filled with the same colour grey desk, carpet, and bank of metal filing-cabinets—all modern, straight lines unrelieved by decoration, and harshly lit by overhead fluorescent lights. Four spots of colour stood out in the room like stains, and Stone's eyes sought them out in relief: three big, wine-coloured leather chairs, with the same brass studding as had been on the grey leather doors, stood grouped around the desk, one behind and two in front; and a coloured chromo portrait of Marshal Tito hung directly behind the desk just over Decani's head.

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Dumbfounded by the room, Stone stood at the doorway, taking it in. It was a moment before he was aware that Grout was already halfway across the room, and that Decani had come out from behind his desk to meet him.

"Petar!"

"Maxim!" The first-name greetings and flood of swiftly exchanged Serbo-Croat, that came with a European-style embrace between the two men, sent uneasy doubts flaring through Stone. These two greeted each other like long-lost brothers, or old friends. What was going on? Decani retreated a pace, still holding Grout by the shoulders though at arm's length, and said, "But we must speak English, Maxim, for Mister Stone."

Grout also stepped back and Decani's arms fell naturally to his sides. "You've met Mr. Stone," Grout said.

"Yes," Decani said, the blue lips smiling, the glasses glinting, "but in somewhat unfortunate circumstances, Maxim. We got a call last night from Mister Stone's hotel that there had been shooting heard, and since I just happened to be working late I went along, with the others, to investigate."

"That was fortunate for Mr. Stone," Grout commented.

"Yes, it was: someone had been killed in Stone's room, an Antun Vuk..." Decani stopped in mid sentence, his eyes glued to Grout's face.

"Vuk? Antun Vuk? The name isn't familiar. Did I know the man?" Grout inquired, blank-faced. "And you thought Mr. Stone was involved, Petar?" Grout raised his voice and eyebrows together.

"Well, Maxim, what could I think? The boy was in Mister Stone's room, dead. Shot. You know, Maxim, tastes differ in these matters, some men do like young boys..."

"Doctor Decani," Stone cut in, his voice hard and definite, "I am *not* one of those men."

"No, Mister Stone, of course not. But you know that people connected with *literature*—" Decani enunciated the word almost mincingly—"sometimes are. Last night we couldn't be sure. Now we are."

"I'll bet you woke a lot of people in New York to find that out," Stone said sarcastically.

"We have our sources, Mister Stone. Your former wife was very co-operative," Decani grinned, "she told our man that *that* was not one of your problems."

"You called Valerie!" Stone said furiously, aware that he was afraid of what she might have told Decani. "You had no

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right to do that." It had been almost a year and a half since the divorce and her remarriage and he had not been in touch with her once since.

"How else could we find out?" Decani asked innocently, his glasses reflecting straight bars of bluish light. "Now, to business," he went on briskly, "your trip here seems to be quite legitimate. My government is, therefore, very eager to help you. In fact, I've been asked to give you every assistance. The Ministry of Culture is delighted for you to meet our best writers, and we are going ahead to make some appointments for you. This afternoon, you have your first one. You will meet Eleanor Hvar, our foremost English translator.

"Also, since you especially wanted to see Konstantin Karst, I, myself, will arrange an appointment for you with him." Decani's blue lips fluttered in what was supposed to be a disarming smile, but remained a grimace.

"But I didn't want to see Karst, or anyone else, *especially*," Stone protested.

"Has Karst written a new book, Petar?" Grout asked.

"Perhaps, Maxim. I don't know. But after all, he *is* one of our best writers. Mister Stone should at least talk to him. Don't you agree?"

"He was once a very fine writer," Grout said.

"I'll have to ring you up about Karst at your hotel, Mister Stone, because I haven't his address and he is not on the telephone. Here—" he picked a card off his desk—"is Miss Hvar's address. You can find her place very easily."

Decani added, "I'm sorry I can't ask you to sit down and enjoy our customary hospitality, some coffee and *rakija*, but it is a very busy day for me, and that Antun Vuk murder makes it even busier."

"Why do you think he was murdered, Petar?" Grout asked, as Decani herded them towards the door.

Decani shrugged. "Who knows? Perhaps he was trying to rob Mister Stone's hotel room with a friend, and the friend killed him. Some of the people at the hotel saw another man there, but not very clearly." He turned to Stone with a forced grin. "You know, some of our people—the young ones especially—think all Americans are rich."

"Well, aren't they?" Grout asked almost gaily.

"In some ways they are, Maxim," Decani said, unsmiling, "and in some ways they're not."

In the cupolaed waiting room downstairs, there was no-one to be seen. Stone walked to the outer door in front of Grout

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and pulled sharply at the door handle. The door, which he had expected to open easily, was locked, and didn't give an inch. Grout burst out laughing. "Warren, you're not used to this part of the world yet. Getting into these buildings is hard enough, but getting out is much harder. You don't exit from the scene until they're ready to let you." Grout walked to an antique French desk and ran his hands along the bottom edge. "Probably there's a release mechanism here."

"Pardon." The secretary had come up silently. He reached past Grout, touched a part of the desk, a small buzz sounded and the door clicked open. Grout pulled it wide and stood aside for Stone to pass through; then, bowing slightly to the man at the buzzer, he followed.

"A matter of doors and postures," Stone said after they had walked several streets in silence. "I went in expecting all kinds of trouble from Decani, and he promises to arrange for me to see Konstantin Karst. I feel as if I were trying to knock down a door that someone opened just before my shoulder got there and I went flying on my face. Then, just when I'm beginning to feel that maybe the whole thing's a mistake, I'm baulked by a door that won't open when it should."

"*Death hath a thousand doors to let out life. I shall find one,*" Grout quoted softly and sadly.

"You know that Massinger line!" Stone exclaimed. "It's haunted me for years, especially during the war."

"Don't forget it, Warren. Keep it in mind here all the time," Grout said emphatically.

"You don't really believe that mockery in there straightened anything out, do you Warren? It's too true to be good, as the vulgar expression goes. That talk with Decani complicates matters. For one thing, I'm convinced—don't ask me why or how because I don't know—that Decani's boys didn't kill Antun Vuk; they're as eager to find out who did as we are."

"We are?"

"We are. Listen, Warren, sometimes let your guts choose for you, like back there with that skinny hoodlum. Sometimes your guts have more brains than your head."

"You mean I'm stupid."

"No, you know that's not what I mean. It's just that you're trying so hard to be detached, that you're making yourself a zombie."

"That's what my ex-wife used to say all the time."

"Well, maybe she was right. You know you care what happened to that boy, Antun Vuk."

He changed the subject. "Remember something you said about Karst's former high-powered friends? You said they suspected he had written a book about them and for one reason or another they weren't willing or able to do anything about it?"

"Yes. So what?"

"I think you've just been picked to get Karst's book for them." Stone thought that over.

"You mean, Decani arranges for me to see Karst. Karst gives me the book. Then they take the book away from me."

"The plan has all the virtues of simplicity. And you do the dirty work for them. In present circumstances they don't want to make Karst a hero, a focus for discontent or resistance. Most of all they don't want him to become a way of organising a *second* political party. That's the crux. If they pick you up at the border with Karst's manuscript, they get you both. They get you for smuggling an illegal manuscript. They get him for violating their State Secrets law."

"But why not just take it from Karst?"

"If they did it that way it would look bad and might get them *more* organised opposition, not less. This way, you're a foreigner, an American imperialist, and he's collaborating with the enemies of the country."

"Well, what do I do now?"

"I don't know," Grout said. "I'll have to talk to Townsend."

"Townsend? Is he your boss?"

"Not exactly, but I'll have to tell him what the situation is."

"You're not going to tell him about Karst's note to me?"

"I must, Warren, it's my duty . . . and for your own good."

"I told you about those notes in confidence," Stone said bitterly. "I told you personally, not officially, Maxim."

Grout lowered his eyes to the ground, then raised them and looked directly into Stone's face. "I'm an official representative of the United States government here," he said tiredly. "I've a job to do. In that job there are no personal confidences and no personal friends."

"A commissar *manqué*." He saw Grout wince as he spoke the words. "Your job is to tell Townsend?"

"Yes."

"And if I mentioned to Decani or Townsend that you told me who Antun Vuk was?"

"I don't think you'd do that—it wouldn't do any good."

"No, probably not," Warren admitted. "Why Townsend? Is he the intelligence officer, the CIA man?"

"I can't discuss that with you, Warren."

An unpleasant, uneasy quiet fell between them.

"I'm sorry, but I must report what you said to me, even in confidence. You can't trust anyone anywhere, but certainly not here. Don't even trust me," Grout said in a harsh voice.

"I can see that now, and I'll remember it," Stone replied.

"Do you want me to go to see this translator with you?"

"So you can report what I say to Townsend?"

"That's not necessary, Warren."

"Do you know Eleanor Hvar?"

"No I don't, but I have heard of her. And I've seen some of her translations. They're excellent."

"If I have to play a lone hand," Stone said, "I might as well start learning to play it. And since, as you so wisely pointed out, I ought not to trust anyone, not even you, I think I'd prefer to go by myself."

"Are you sure you trust yourself?" Grout asked very softly.

"Not much. But more than I trust anyone else right now."

Grout put out his hand, but Stone ignored it.

"I'll call you later in the day. Keep in touch, will you, Warren?"

"I'll keep in touch," Stone agreed. "Besides, if you want me, Decani's sure to know where I am." Then he turned on his heel and walked away, leaving Grout refilling his pipe from the oilskin pouch, and followed by his soft-voiced advice, "*Be careful, Warren, be very careful.*"

Eleanor Hvar lived not far from Stone's hotel on one of those many narrow sidestreets that twisted and turned away from the centre of the city as if in anguish. At first, because the streets were poorly marked and many houses had no numbers, Stone couldn't find it. He had refused to ask anyone at the hotel how to get there, and had politely ignored the doorman's too quickly flagged waiting taxi as he left the hotel. Grout had warned him to be careful. He had a street map of the city and he could find Eleanor Hvar's house by himself.

As he went, Stone watched to see if he was being followed, stopping to look into store windows where he could see reflected what was behind him; grimly remembering how handy Decani's trick glasses were. His bumbling stops to look at street signs and numbers, and gawking in shop windows, paid off: someone *was* following him, a nondescript bland-faced man in a shabby loden coat, carrying an oddly weighted-down scuffed brown leather briefcase.

When Stone found Eleanor Hvar's street, he deliberately passed it by and continued about three-quarters of the way to the next street. Then he stopped, trying to appear as confused as he could, and looked round. He made the first awkward steps as if he were going back the way he came. Slowly, but quite naturally, the loden coat, now facing him, paused at a house entrance, rang and went inside. It was what Stone had counted on. He swivelled and sprinted down the rest of the street, turned sharply left, noting out of the corner of his eye that the loden coat had not come out yet. Stone raced up the other street until he found what he was looking for—houses with alleyways and yards through which he could backtrack to Eleanor Hvar's block. He went over a wooden fence, past a chained dog, who looked so surprised that he didn't even bark, and was back on her street.

A high stone wall almost hid Eleanor Hvar's one-storey house and Stone, still throwing glances behind him, breathlessly pushed the bell and pounded impatiently on the iron lattice-work gate. As he was about to try to force it, the gate was pulled open slightly from inside and a dark, large-eyed face looked out. Stone quickly shouldered through the opening past the girl, and slammed the gate shut behind him. There was still no sign of the loden coat; for the moment at least he had eluded him.

Taking the girl's arm, Stone towed her half-running after him up the path to the house and through the open door. Only in the darkened vestibule did he stop to catch his breath, softly close the door behind them, and apologise. "My regrets," he said in French. "I am Monsieur Warren Stone, and I have an appointment with Madame Hvar. Would you please tell her that I have arrived?"

"But certainly, I shall tell her," the girl replied in husky accurate French, and for an instant Stone caught an ironic note in her voice. "Will you come into the *salon*?"

"Thank you very much," Stone said, aware now that his heart was pounding, but feeling his body alive and tingling with the effort and excitement.

He followed her stiff back and slapping red-leather clogs down a small corridor, through half-glazed French doors, into a sizeable room whose high windows faced a small garden at the back of the house. There, gratefully, Stone slumped into an armchair and lit a cigarette, listening to the homely, comforting sound of the girl's retreating leather clogs and letting his breathing and blood pressure settle down to normal. The

afternoon light poured monochrome greys into the room, mottling a wall of books that went from floor to ceiling. Paintings and sculptures were everywhere.

The sculpture was mostly metal figures of soldiers in combat. One was magnificent. About two-feet high, it was a bronze of a naked man half-rising from his knees. His head thrown back on a rigid neck, looked up to unconcerned heaven; his arms akimbo, the palms were bent back so far that they looked as if they had been crazily broken at the wrists. Where his chest and guts had been there was only an amœbic-shaped empty space, as if his centre had been shot right out of him. Pleading and rebellious together, the figure was angry and powerful, and at the same time helpless and hopeless.

Lifting the sculpture, Stone was surprised to find it so heavy, but its rough texture and the cold feel of the metal pleased his fingers. As he raised it to the level of his eyes, it was wreathed in his cigarette smoke, which made it seem not only more dramatic, but as if, even with his insides blown away and the smoke of battle not yet cleared, that bronze man still could and would rise to his feet.

"Do you like it?" The sudden question in English so startled him that he almost dropped the bronze. Carefully, Stone set it back on the desk before turning to answer. He was even more disconcerted because facing him was the same girl who had let him in.

"You are Madame Hvar?"

"I'm Eleanor Hvar," she said, nodding. "Do you always make such entrances?"

"Someone was following me," Stone said, abashed. "A man in a loden coat carrying a small brown briefcase."

"Everyone in Eastern Europe carries a briefcase. It has the day's lunch in it, and it makes them feel important. And Americans in this part of the world always think they're being followed. The secret police, you know." She threw back her head and laughed, but her laugh did not ring true.

Stone really looked at Eleanor Hvar for the first time. An aura of darkness came from her like a wave that threatened to overwhelm him. Her black hair was parted in the centre and drawn tightly back underneath a white silk band into a pinned dark pool that lapped at the nape of her neck. She wore no makeup, which emphasised her heavily-lashed black eyes. Her skin was dark. Neither the hint of pallor beneath nor the even white teeth of the too wide laughing mouth relieved the overall darkling sense of menace.

He offered her a cigarette which she took and tapped nervously against her fingernail. He lit the cigarette for her, then sat down and waited while Eleanor Hvar walked restlessly around the room, and finally returned to her desk and sat down. She put on a pair of horn-rimmed glasses and in what seemed almost an official manner asked, "Now what can I do for you, Mr. Stone?"

"Are you afraid, Mrs. Hvar?" Stone stopped.

"Anyone who is not afraid in our world rapidly leaves it," she retorted. "And I'm *Miss* Hvar. That man—" she pointed to the bronze on the desk—"was *not* afraid. He was my husband, Mirko Sutnjak. He's dead. I have used my own name for a long time."

"I'm sorry," Stone said, but for what he wasn't quite sure.

"Doctor Decani told me that you represented one of the best literary agencies in America."

"He flattered me. I'm a partner in a small literary agency. We are interested in adding some of your country's writers and books to our list. Because I know almost nothing of your modern literature, Doctor Decani thought you would be just the person to help me meet the right writers and buy the right books."

"Doctor Decani was also flattering me . . . Are you interested in our books for political or literary reasons?"

This time Stone laughed. "I wondered how soon we'd get to that. I could give you a stock answer and say that I'm interested in books that make money. That would give the proper American materialist stereotype. But the fact is that I *like* books. And all kinds. I even like books whose politics and morals I don't agree with, simply because they are well-written or intensely felt. My wife—I mean my ex-wife—divorced me, she said, because I loved books better than anything else . . . and sometimes I think my partner will divorce me for my affection for good books that don't sell."

That seemed to ease the tension, and she showed him her books, of which she was very proud. Apparently it had taken a great deal of difficulty to collect them, and they represented a choice selection of the best in English and American literature, cheek by jowl with a collection of Russian and Soviet books. There were the French too, and a large section of shelves devoted to the works of her own country.

"That's a very non-partisan collection," Stone said, meaning it as a compliment.

"The Partisan days are over," Eleanor Hvar said bitterly,

assuming a meaning of the word Stone had not intended. "I like your American writers," she continued, as if trying to make up for something, "and your books. They are strong and colourful and international, not like ours, which are only for this little world here, this small space of earth. But your books are like that sculpture—" she pointed to the bronze on the desk—"they have a hole in the centre where there should be heart and hope."

"This is an age of negation," Stone commented. "Our times and lives justify it."

"It is always hard to affirm," she said almost angrily, and not talking altogether to him. "Life is never easy. To write you must transcend the time, seem to see beyond it, give affirmation to one's self and to others. Not falsely, by being *positive*, but by celebrating life, all of it, as it is."

Celebrating life? Stone thought. What could be celebrated in an age of murder other than murder and evil?

"As it is?" Stone brought himself to ask aloud, just managing to suppress the edge of irony in his voice.

"As it is," she replied sadly, "there is no other way."

Awkwardly, she stood up, took off her glasses, and said, "Would you like to have a walk? If you have not seen our Kalemegdan fortress, I should enjoy showing it to you."

He had not seen Kalemegdan and said he would be glad of the company of such an expert guide, but she ignored his half-jocular tone of gallantry and promised to return in a moment. Stone sat and smoked his cigarette down to a stub, wondering why he felt like a turtle on its back, undersides bare and vulnerable. This was the second person in a single day with whom he had felt that small sunburst of intimacy and affection that he had not felt with others for years. Maxim Grout. And now Eleanor Hvar.

Why now and here? Why so swiftly and abruptly? Why for people he was not even sure were friendly? Was it the shock of Antun Vuk's murder? The danger and the excitement of it? Or simply that in the course of events, the time had come for his shell to crack? No, he said to himself, no, these people don't concern me.

Eleanor Hvar came back into the room. Now she was wearing perfume, a light lingering scent of lily of the valley, that reminded him of Paris. Without speaking, he stood up and followed her out of the house, taking one last lingering look at the bronze on the desk, the light from the windows piercing its bowels like an ancient grey sword.

In the street, wary but casual, Stone glanced to see if the loden coat had tracked him, but no-one was visible. As they walked, he only half-listened to Eleanor Hvar as she talked about how she hated Belgrade because, apart from Kalemegdan there wasn't a building over one hundred and fifty years old in the city. The city she loved was Dubrovnik, old and walled, and in many ways still the same seventeenth century city of Ragusa. She even kept a small flat in Dubrovnik.

Stone managed to nod at the proper intervals, but he was watching a small green Italian Fiat that seemed to be driving much too slowly behind them. As they turned off the street into Kalemegdan Park, the Fiat continued on its way and Stone was relieved.

When he looked at Eleanor Hvar's dark profile, the short straight nose, the fine sculptured cheekbones, the almost too-determined jut of jaw, her features blended into a face that might have been carved on the bowsprit of a Ragusan galley. Only then, by the face's beautiful remoteness, did Stone realise that Eleanor Hvar too was talking with only half her mind and thinking of other things . . .

Kalemegdan is the ridge overlooking the joining of the Danube and Sava rivers, the strategic high ground for which so many have fought and destroyed Belgrade: Avars, Celts, Goths and Romans; Turks, Hungarians, Austrians and Nazis . . . Its history was really the history of the city and of Serbia, and of a good part of the fate of central Europe—Eleanor Hvar spoke in an emotionless voice that charged what she said with more feeling than it otherwise might have done. Empires, Eastern and Western, had always met and clashed at Belgrade because it lay athwart the classic invasion routes, the river valleys. "Belgrade," she said, "has been levelled some thirty-five times." There was more than pity and anger in her voice; there was also a kind of perverse pride. For being levelled, or for rising again, Stone wondered, and remembered that bronze figure struggling to its feet.

Quietly Eleanor Hvar told him what Belgrade was like on April 6, 1941, when the *Luftwaffe* smashed it to bits. "They killed my parents, but even after I found them, saw them, I couldn't believe my father and mother were really dead. Only later, much later did it come home to me. It was the end of my life, I thought then, but it was only the end of my youth. I was sixteen years old."

Spontaneously, Stone reached out and touched her arm, but

she jumped back as if she'd been burnt. Her face darkened.

As she moved away from him, Stone knew he had touched something in her as she had in him that had made her speak of her youth unguardedly as he had spoken of Valerie.

"You never had children with your wife?" she asked with a fine feminine irrelevance that Stone knew was anything but.

"No. Nor with anyone else, so far as I know," he replied, trying to grin. "I'm the last Stone of my house."

"And I the last of mine."

They had now climbed to the top of Kalemegdan ridge. Looming above them, on a high stone pillar and plinth stood a grey stone statue, its back turned on them and the city, looking out into the distance to the north. "That," she said, pointing up at it, "is the famous Meštrović statue, *The Victor*, sometimes called *The Herald of Victory*, or *The Messenger of Victory*, depending on who does the translating, put up after the First World War . . ."

Their eyes met and even before she could finish the sentence, they began to laugh, laughing until tears came, unable to stop, while passers-by, mostly young soldiers arm-in-arm with their girls, strolled past and looked at them curiously. When they were laughed out, though still trembling, they stood next to each other on the promontory, peering over the parapet, down the steep banks past the broken battlements, the scrub trees and shrubs, to the peacefully flowing grey-green Sava.

Eleanor Hvar took up her rôle as guide once more, pointing out the New Belgrade growing up on the left bank of the Sava, the Danube, and beyond it, northwards, the fertile plain of the Voivodina. Stone asked if there was a restaurant above, and when she said yes, he took her arm and they set out for it.

The restaurant was scarcely what Stone expected. A low-ceilinged room with bare walls, a few wooden chairs and tables without tablecloths, and a small bar. It was dingy and depressing. The only colourful thing in the room was the huge red and yellow and chrome juke box which dominated it.

They drank coffee and *rakija* in silence. Out of the window Stone saw the silent green flow of the Sava. the few boats off the river, and the evening lowering. A strange sense of peace and quiet stole through him which he did not try to understand.

A boy in faded tight blue jeans who, but for the Slavic cast of his features, might have been from Iowa, stood up and walked over to them. "American?" he said, pointing a

finger at Stone's chest. Stone nodded, his muscles beginning to tense.

The next question was not in English and Eleanor Hvar explained, "He wants to know if you are acquainted with Elvis Presley."

"Tell him I went out with Benny Goodman and 'The Big Apple,'" Stone grinned, relaxing again.

"What?" she asked, puzzled.

"Tell him I don't know any jazz musicians."

She translated. The boy's face fell. He half turned back to his companions, who were watching, and in the air in front of Stone, with his two forefingers, he drew a square. Stone burst into laughter. He guessed he was a square at that. The boy grinned, abashed, and stuck out his hand. Stone shook it and then the boy went back to his friends. Someone put a coin into the juke box and Elvis Presley began to stomp.

The boy reminded Stone of Antun Vuk and the small feeling of peace that had stolen through him, born of the smell of Eleanor Hvar's perfumed presence, the Turkish coffee and the *rakija*, and the slow descent of darkness over the inscrutable pulse of the Sava, evaporated. It left as swiftly and mysteriously as it had come. Stone paid the bill and they went out. The boy who had talked to them smiled and waved goodbye, and Stone waved back.

Outside, the evening hovered in the air. The moon, already out, was hidden behind a heavy cloud it had chalkily outlined. Walking down the narrow winding path and steep steps, Stone saw the round blob of the loden coat and the lean sway of the totem-pole shadow at the same instant, like some obscene silhouette of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, coming up towards them. And as soon as he saw then he knew: it was here. Separate paths converged on where they stood between two of the Kalemegdan's citadel's crenelated towers. From the right the two shadows came slowly at them; on the left, the path went across the drawbridge over the chasm that separated the fortress from the park and its lower reaches. Roughly, Stone took Eleanor Hvar's arm and pushed her towards the drawbridge path. "Run!" he whispered hoarsely. "Make believe you don't know me. Get away from here."

He felt her biceps flex. She didn't move. She too had seen them. "Are they coming for you?"

"Yes."

"You're sure?"

"Sure."

"Why?"

"I don't know. And this is no time for explanations. Run!"

It was too late—the totem-pole had already cut across to block one path to the drawbridge; the loden coat stood bulking in the other. Stone pulled Eleanor Hvar behind him, against the citadel ramparts, and waited. For an instant, the moon came out of the clouds and illuminated their faces. There was no question now—the man he had seen with Grout that morning, the one in the glass cage of Decani's building, and the totem-pole were the same man.

He and the loden coat were only a dozen feet from Stone now, keeping well away from one another, playing it very cautiously and professionally. Stone, in the shadows, knew that they could not see him too plainly.

They stopped, but hesitated only for a fraction of a minute. The totem-pole's gun seemed to grow out of his hand, but the loden coat began to fumble with the catch of the brown briefcase he was carrying. In that instant Stone moved. He slammed his fist into the loden coat's face, lunged for the briefcase as it dropped, scooped it up and with both hands threw its weight at the totem-pole. As it knocked him off balance, Stone followed like a battering ram, hitting him sharply in the throat with his fist. The totem-pole coughed, wheezing to catch his breath, and still trying to bring his gun arm around.

Stone clubbed the arm and heard the gun go clattering on the path. Before he could turn, the loden coat hit him from behind. His throat was caught and strangling in the crook of the loden coat's arm, his hair being pulled so hard by strong fingers that his scalp felt as if it were being torn away from his skull. He saw the totem-pole looking for his gun, and then Eleanor Hvar leaping on him, throwing him back on his heels, pummelling him. Stone's body moved as it had once been trained. His elbow crashed back into the fat stomach, loosening the hold on his hair and neck as he enjoyed the "Oof!" that whistled past his ear. His heel stomped down on the man's foot, and as the gasp was followed by a cry, Stone pitched the fat man over his shoulder to the ground.

The totem-pole had already reached the gun, but Eleanor Hvar was faster. She kicked it out of his reach once, then kicked it again. The gun flew over the side of the drawbridge into the chasm below, crashing through the underbrush like

some small frightened animal. Angrily, the totem-pole smashed Eleanor Hvar in the face and sent her reeling, then drove her back towards the edge of the drawbridge while she fought him with her fists. Stone went wild. He ran and with all his strength drove both fists into the totem-pole's back, right at the kidneys. The man wilted, sinking to his knees. Stone pulled him around by the hair, cuffing him with his open palm, back and forth, thinking of Antun Vuk.

When Stone heard the yelling, he wasn't sure if it was his own or Eleanor Hvar's, but he let the totem-pole go and whirled to face what he thought would be another assault from the loden coat. A group of soldiers were racing down from the restaurant and the loden coat was already scurrying away towards the first yellow flicker of the city lights below. The totem-pole had also seen them coming. He was on his feet once more, though weaving slightly. The two faced each other. Stone moved to grab him, but the totem-pole, eluding him, merged swiftly into the shadows of the clotting darkness. A guttural whisper reached Stone. "*I will kill you next time,*" the totem-pole promised in German. "*I will kill you, Mister Stone.*"

END OF PART ONE

IN ARGOSY NEXT MONTH

The second part of
THE THOUSAND DOORS,
Abraham Rothberg's exciting new novel

PLUS

WINSTON GRAHAM

EVAN HUNTER

HELEN McCLOY

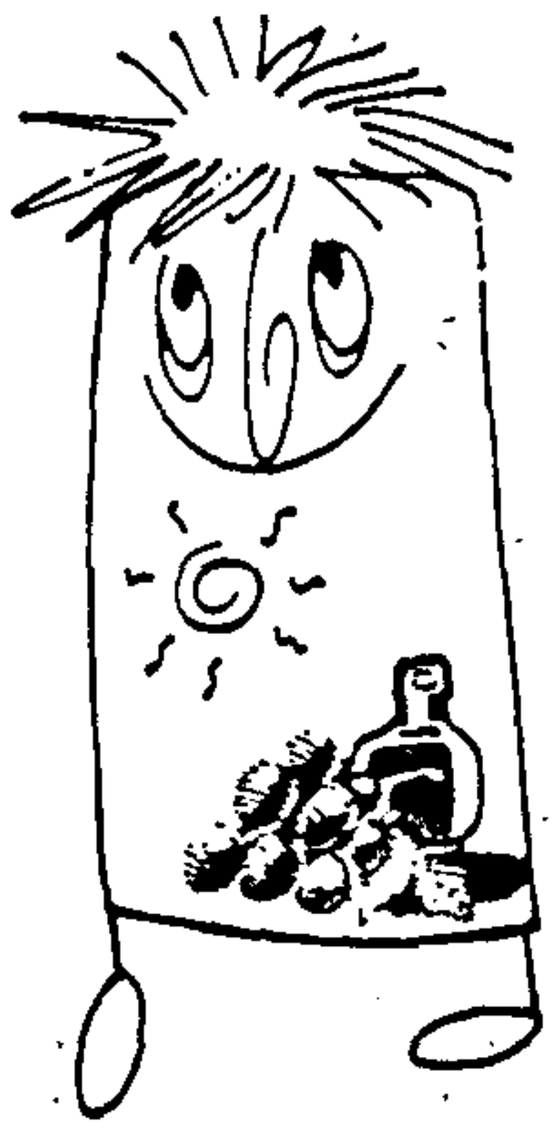
YOUNGMAN CARTER

and more top names with the pick
of the world's short stories

ON SALE JUNE 4

TRUE lovers of wines should be imbued with a sense of adventure, ready always to experiment and seek pleasure from new fields. It is not to decry the well-known wines of France, Germany, Italy and the Iberian peninsula to say that wine drinkers in Britain have a better opportunity than ever before to try the wines of Central and Eastern Europe. Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece and Russia have been producing wines for centuries, as has Turkey. Now they are sending them to Britain in increasing quantities.

If wines could only speak, those of Austria would be described as cheerful and lighthearted, a quality they share with the Hungarian white wines. The Austrian equivalent of a vin ordinaire is Schluck, selling at about 10s. per bottle, but the wines they send to the United Kingdom include a number of estate-bottled wines. For example, from the famous house of Morandell come the dry white 1959 Furstenthaler Riesling at under 11s. per bottle; the delicate but fruity Steiner Hund of 1959 at under 14s.; and the delightful red 1959 Kaltererseee Auslese at a little over 13s. These are very moderate prices for estate-bottled wines of high quality.



Probably the most popular Hungarian wine here is the white Riesling, which is imported in bulk and sold under the brand names of various merchants, at round about 9s. per bottle. It is really good value for the money. The red Egri Bikaver, known as Bull's Blood because of its rich garnet-like colour, should suit those who like a full, strong wine. At round about 11s. it is also good value.

Hungary, however, is famous for her rich amber-coloured and mainly sweet dessert wine—Tokay. Louis XIV, the Roi Soleil, called it " the King of wines and a wine for Kings." Schubert composed a song about it, Voltaire praised it—even that stern Puritan Oliver Cromwell had a good word to say for it. Tokay lies on the sun-drenched hills of Zemplen, where wine has been grown since A.D. 270. Of the several Tokay wines on the British market, all estate-bottled, the rich Aszu 5 puttonyos of 1953 is perhaps the finest, costing about 25s. 6d. per bottle. The dry Szamorodni of the same year is about 15s. 6d.

The Rumanian wines provide an interesting field of experiment, and are not unlike some of the Italian. The red wines are more suited to the English palate and food than the white. The same applies to the Russian, which are increasing steadily in popularity. They include the red Mokuzani and the white dry Tsinandali, both from Georgia.

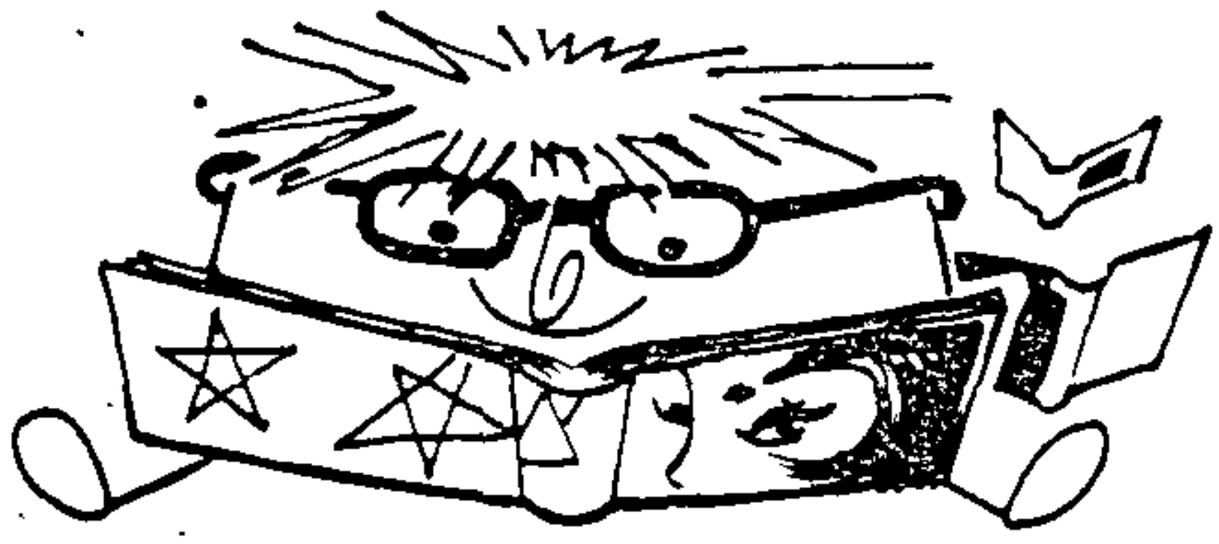
The Yugoslav white wines have an established reputation in Britain, and it is fully deserved. The most popular are the Lutomer Riesling at about 8s. 6d. and the Sylvaner at about 10s. The Traminer and Sauvignon are fuller wines, and a little dearer. Wine has been grown in the Lutomer region for over a thousand years. Less well known is Tiger's Milk, a sweet white wine, and the red Dinjac, a rather strong wine.

The Bulgarian wines are comparatively new arrivals on the British table, and it will be surprising if they do not become popular, both from the point of view of price and quality. The principal white wines are the Riesling, Dimiat and Misket varieties: a small quantity of the delicate Chardonnay is also produced. Dimiat has a yellow-greenish colour, and quite a high alcohol content. There are five red wines, of which Gamza, Trakia and Cabernet are the best known.

The Greek wines have a character all their own; the Cyprus wines are similar but not the same. The best-known Greek wine is Retsina, white and matured in resinated casks. Either you think it is wonderful—or undrinkable; there is no halfway house. Those approaching Greek wines for the first time would be wise to try them at a good Greek restaurant, bearing in mind that Samos is dry and white, Muscat de Samos is sweet and white, Mavrodaphne, sweet and red. S. B. Metaxas Ltd. of 5, Fenchurch Street, import a most pleasant estate-bottled dry white wine, Santa Laura, at about 12s. The Greek Wine Importers' Corporation of 110, Fenchurch Street can supply a full list and the names of retail stockists.

J. B. W.

bookshelf



REMEMBER The Achilles Affair, one of Argosy's most successful serials? Now, highly-coloured and much, much larger than life comes the new Berkely Mather, *The Road and the Star*. Put all critical quibbling behind you and settle down to enjoy a thundering good yarn of swashbuckling and derring-do in the days of Cromwell and his kill-joys.

Its narrator-hero, dare-devil Lord Gil Bemforth, is a Royalist on the run when he meets Cloda, a red-headed, shapely, coarse-mouthed and altogether splendid doxy who keeps him out of the hands of the pursuing Roundheads until he is foolish enough to ditch her, when he is immediately captured and shipped as a slave to the Cape of Good Hope.

On board, Bemforth meets up with an unfrocked priest, nicknamed the Angel, a bad lot if ever there was one, and after many gaudy and perilous adventures on land and sea, finds Cloda again.

But—can this really be Cloda? How changed! How different! (In this reviewer's opinion, how disappointingly so!)

This is cloak-and-dagger stuff *par excellence*, and obviously headed for the best-seller-and-book-into-film list. A pity Errol Flynn is no longer with us: he would have gloried in the part. (Collins, 21s.)

Using Somerset Maugham's aphorism, "To be informed is to be entertained," as a battle-cry, Penguin are stepping up their non-fiction list with some really excellent titles. For instance, *The Heart of the Hunter*, perhaps the best as well as the most successful travel book to appear in recent years. This is the third book by Laurens Van der Post, that able philosopher-writer, to be paperbacked and one everybody could well add to his collection.

Another thoroughly readable author, Konrad Lorenz, is represented by *Man Meets Dog*—an utterly unsentimental,

adult examination of Man's Best Friend. Anyone who has ever known, let alone owned a dog will want this and certainly the thousands who have already enjoyed his King Solomon's Ring. The most absorbing and out-of-the-ordinary dog book to come our way. Konrad Lorenz, incidentally, is the distinguished Professor of Psychology at the Albertus University of Königsberg.

Late-comers to fall under the spell of the urbane spy-cum-suspense-cum-thriller writer, William Haggard, can cheer loudly; *Slow Burner*, long difficult to obtain, has just been republished as a paperback. The plot? A leak of an important secret formula to a hostile foreign power. As a bonus, the most unconventional and delicious love affair—and we mean affair! (All published by Penguin at 3s. 6d. each.)

The sweet smell of summer in the air and what better time to take a deep breath and think of holidays! Italy? Wonderful! Then-what better buy for between now and then than *Brush Up Your Italian.* This new edition of Giovanna Tassinari's book is meant for Italy as it is today; the sort of phrases one needs for shops, hotels, waiters and all the ordinary everyday happenings. It's the greatest fun, too. (Dent, 10s. 6d.)

John Griffiths is a newcomer to writing though his own life up to date seems to have been highly eventful. After Cambridge he led what he describes as a shoe-string expedition along the route of Alexander the Great in Afghanistan. Since then he has travelled widely, taught, worked as a journalist and as a script-writer for the BBC, and at the last election stood as a Liberal candidate (unsuccessfully). And in these busy years he also acquired a wife and four sons.

His book, *The Survivors*, is a jolly good effort in what has become an increasingly challenging field since H. G. Wells first thought up The Invisible Man. The time is 1200 GMT and the Chinese invade Eastern Europe. Doctor Gregor, a nuclear physicist and hater of violence, has laid his plans in advance for the survival of a chosen few to start a brave new world once the holocaust has passed. Hughes, a political columnist, finds their cave hideout in the nick of time. But what will happen to him, the only really *normal* man, who has gate-crashed into this world of fanatics and scientists? (Collins, 16s.)

Have you ever looked into a bucket full of live eels? Their turns, twists and convolutions strongly resemble the plot of Adam Hall's *The Berlin Memorandum.* The mixture's

certainly as before—spies, sex and a *soupçon* of sadism, but nothing is what you think it is—she's a double agent; no she isn't, she's on our side; he's turned traitor, no he can't have for he's just been hideously wiped out by the enemy; that's the man who's got the secret formula, no he hasn't, it's only a harmless substitute—never a dull, uncomplicated moment.

The author, by the way, isn't what he seems either: he's already written several successes under the name of Elleston Trevor. (Collins, 18s.)

Bernard Toms' first novel, *George Arbuthnott Jarrett*, is about a brash, thoroughly unpleasant affair and it almost succeeds in being brilliant.

G. A. Jarrett is a schizophrenic and Arbuthnott, the better half, tells the story of himself and George whom he fears (and how very rightly) is getting the upper hand. George is a compulsive drunk and a lecher and, despite the rather feeble efforts of Arbuthnott, goes steadily from bad to horrifying worse in the company of such an unpleasant collection of tarts, perverts, addicts. adulterers and meths drinkers that one's eyes positively bulge. From sordid beginning to horrid end I can remember only two reasonably pleasant people.

But once started, the book is impossible to put down. (Constable, 25s.)

Everyone who hasn't already bought them in the original, more expensive editions, will want *The Alanbrooke War Diaries*—The Turn of the Tide, 1939-43 and Triumph in the West, 1943-46, just issued as paperbacks. They were highly praised by Montgomery himself (not an easy man to please!) and Trevor Roper called them the most important, revealing work that had emerged about the war.

Arthur Bryant's two volumes give the most vivid, forceful picture possible of the great men and great events of our own time. This is living history. (Fontana, 5s. each.)

Don't be put off by the rather unattractive book jacket of Ronald Johnston's *Red Sky in the Morning*. It's a splendid tense adventure yarn for boys and men of all ages.

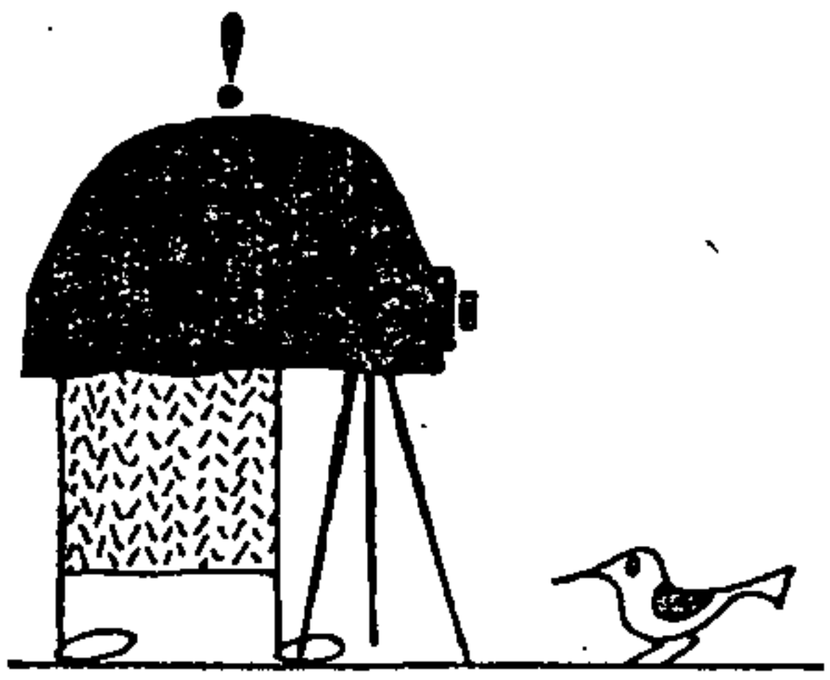
Joe Lennard and his friend Moses take shelter in a cave on their tiny island in the Bahamas when Hurricane Celia heads their way. They rescue the survivors of a wreck which proves to be a big mistake as they soon find themselves fighting for their lives, two against seven dangerous and extremely ungrateful visitors. (Collins, 16s.)

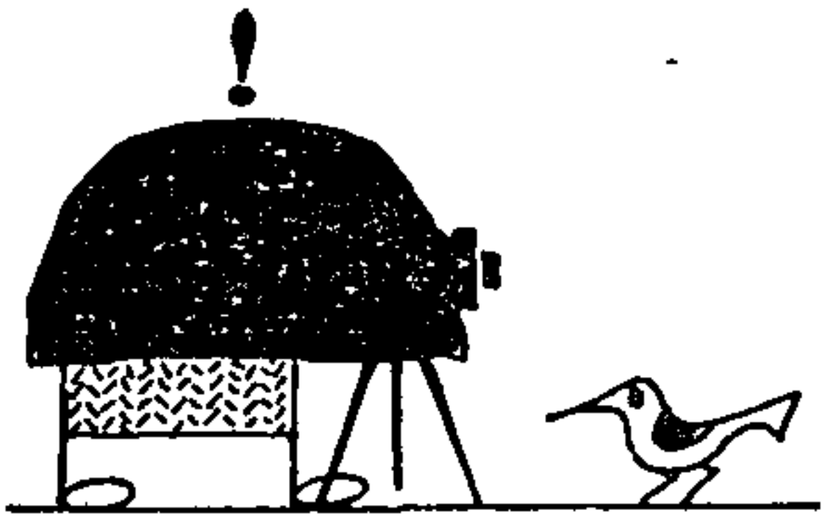
J. D.

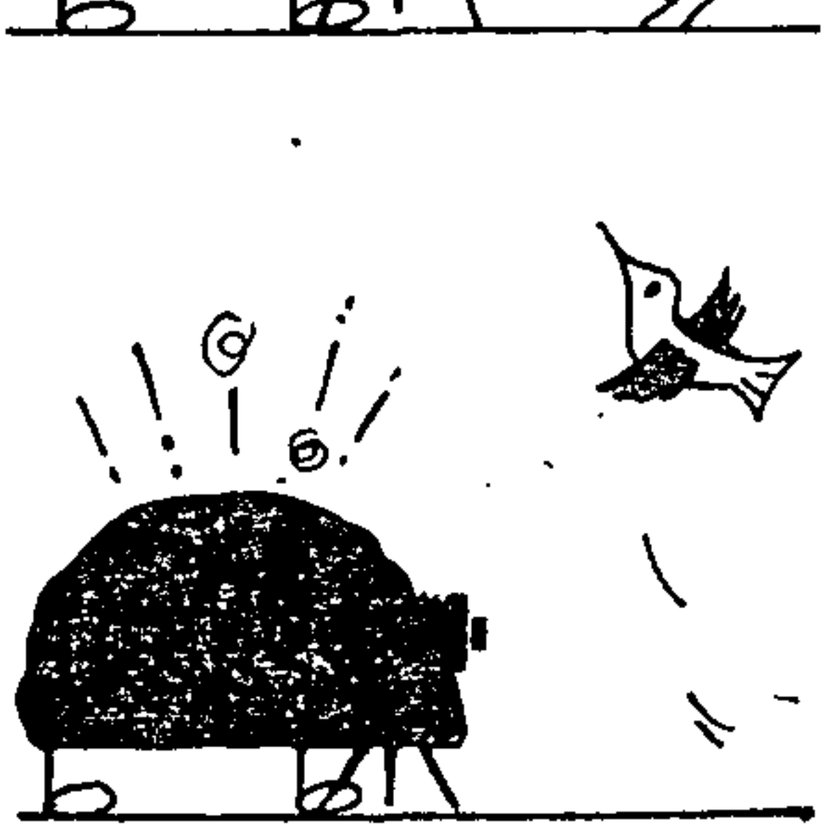
Man with a Camera

FAR too many of the millions of people who will be using cameras this summer are going to be disappointed with the results. Will *you* be one of those who find that some shots are blurry, some too light or dark—and some not there at all?

What can be done to ensure—without a very serious knowledge of photography — that a spool of 36 frames will produce 36 acceptable pictures? This article is concerned with the simple "whys and wherefores" for the camera-user whose knowledge of photography is limited, but who is prepared to take the minimum trouble necessary to produce satisfactory pictures.







TIPS FOR A GOOD PICTURE

First and most important—loading your camera. Always choose a shady spot for this: you must never open the camera in sunlight or brilliant haze. Where no shady spot is at hand, use your own shadow. When loading roll films, ensure that the end of the paper is firmly and squarely attached to the take-up spool. The film will then wind on smoothly and you will have no pictures spoiled by edge fogging or, worse still, the film jamming in the camera.

With the now-popular 35 m.m. camera, *always* check the correct location of the perforations on the take-up sprocket wheel. Before closing the camera-back, wind the film on about an inch to ensure that the film transport is functioning. After closing the camera, wind on one or two frames before making your first exposure and check that the film runs smoothly in the camera.

This safeguard really is important.

Failure to do this could mean that all your pictures might be taken on top of each other—with the rest of the spool blank.

The two most common faults of disappointing pictures are lack of sharpness, and incorrect exposure (either too light or dark).

Lack of sharpness is due to the unsteady holding of the camera (the whole picture being fuzzy), or incorrect focusing (usually a part of the picture is blurred).

Camera movement is very often the result of shooting in haste or after some exertion, so try to observe the time-honoured rule, "Take a firm stance, hold your breath, and press the shutter release as far as it will go."

Of course, if you have a more expensive camera with fast shutter speeds these suggestions are not quite so important. It is a good idea never to take anything at less than 1/60th or 1/100th sec., if at all possible.

With most modern cameras it should be quite easy to get your subject in focus. If your camera has a coupled range-finder or a focusing screen these take care of your distance problems automatically. The cheaper camera with a fixed focus gives sharp pictures over a wide distance range, but you must not get closer to your subject than recommended in your camera instruction book—usually about five or six feet.

Many new cameras have what is called "zone focusing": a pointer on the base of the lens mount which is set (by turning the lens) to an engraved scale marked *portrait, groups, middle distance* and *far distance*—or the equivalent appropriate symbols. This is a very clear and simple method of obtaining correct focus, provided that in your excitement you remember to set the lens!

Corrected exposure of the film is much more easily obtained nowadays than it used to be, unless one possessed that rather expensive item—an exposure meter. Many modern cameras have some sort of automatic or semi-automatic exposure control, which, if the instructions are carefully followed, should result in 100 per cent successful shots. If, however, you have a fairly simple type of camera (and these are still in the majority), do observe the recommended settings on the film instructions sheet. This is an easy chart giving lens aperture settings (usually keeping the same speed for simplicity) for varying brightness of weather conditions. Again, if you follow these carefully you will obtain a very high percentage of correctly exposed pictures. Many people load their film and throw away the instructions sheet without looking at it, under

the impression that the information is too technical to understand. This is not so: these charts are simple to follow.

To improve the picture from a visual point of view, here are a few important basic points to observe. Pictures hold much more interest and pack more punch if the subject can be made to fill all the available space. Get in as close as you can (type of camera permitting), and make sure that you cut out any unwanted foreground or background. Watch the background carefully, ensuring that there is nothing fussy or distracting about it. Often by just raising or lowering the camera slightly you can cut out unwanted distractions. Remember that the human eye is selective and often sees only what it wants to see, but the camera will record everything, showing only too clearly the telegraph pole or sprouting chimney.

ACCESSORIES AND FILM

Camera accessories should be kept to a minimum, but here are two "musts"—

Lens Hood

Whenever a picture has to be taken in the open on a sunny day, or whenever there is a lot of bright light, some of the unwanted light passes across the surface of the lens and is reflected into the camera itself and on to the film. The result is that the picture lacks sparkle and is less bright than it should be. This stray light can be reduced by a lens hood, which is simply a short tube or circular shield, matt black inside, which is slipped on to the front of the lens mount. This will help to keep the unwanted light from the lens and ensure brighter and "snappier" pictures. It is a good idea to use a lens hood always as, in addition to the improvement to the picture, it will protect the lens from damage and, in poor weather, rain.

Filters

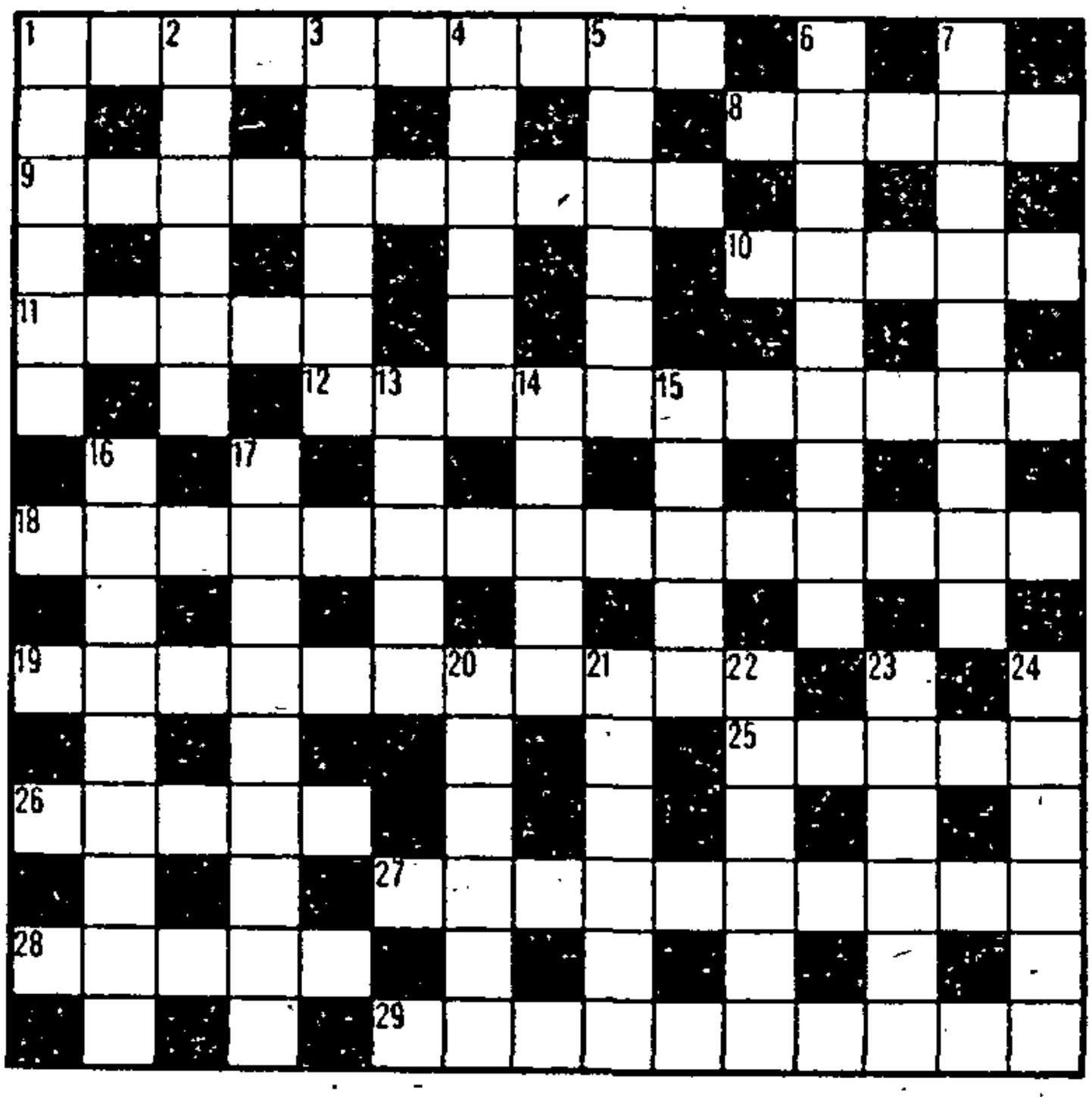
When a picture is taken of a blue sky with white cloud, the finished print is often disappointing because the sky looks a uniform grey or white.

Correction of this fault is made by the use of a yellow filter, which "holds back" the ultra sensitive blue causing the blue of the sky to appear dark, thus showing up the white clouds. With black and white film when the sun is shining, a yellow filter should always be used for scenic pictures, and the exposure should be doubled. The film instruction leaflet will explain this in terms of adjusting your camera. There are, of course, many other filters for other purposes, but, for the amateur, a description of these would only be confusing.

C. B.

ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month



ACROSS

1 Quartet on the bill want somewhere to sleep (4-6).

8 Place — of one's birth? (5).

9 No future in this choice (3, 2, 5).

10 Enduring poet (5).

11 Rides the waves (5).

12 Teacher takes part in great work (11).

18 Book for choristers? (1, 9, 5).

19 RAF chaplain's department? (3, 8).

25 Obliterate! (5).

26 Wren spinning a yarn? (5).

27 Angry naval high-up having a flutter? (3, 7).

28 "Mr. —— Goes to Town" (5).

29 Soldier and statesman to boot! (10).

DOWN

1 Polish? Well, it sounds European! (6).

2 Go for a higher seat? (6).

3 Nicety of language (6).

4 "—— into pruning-hooks" (*Isaiah*) (6).

5 Come out only in emergency (6).

6 Native of Samaria (9).

7 What's a rat in a cabin to do? (9).

13 Vicar loses head committing crime (5).

14 Items important to runners (5).

15 Will you step on it as you mount? (5).

16 Palsy is his occupational hazard! (9).

17 Walk on front (9).

20 To exist, but where? (6).

21 It's slavery! (6).

22 Money a farmer got? (6).

23 Study of unknown author (6).

24 City transport (6).

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